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FRANK R. STOCKTON

VOLUME XVI

STORIES

II



THE NOVELS AND STORIES OF
FRANK R. STOCKTON

STORIES
II



NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1889

"Is that Mr. T. Powers—?"

From a photograph by FRANK O. SMALL



"Is that Mr. Thomas——?"

From a drawing by FRANK O. SMALL.

THE NOVELS AND STORIES OF
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NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1900

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THE DE VINNE PRESS.

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A TALE OF NEGATIVE GRAVITY

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MY wife and I were staying at a small town in northern Italy, and on a certain pleasant afternoon in spring we had taken a walk of six or seven miles to see the sun set behind some low mountains to the west of the town. Most of our walk had been along a hard, smooth highway, and then we had turned into a series of narrower roads, sometimes bordered by walls, and sometimes by light fences of reed or cane. Nearing the mountain, to a low spur of which we intended to ascend, we easily scaled a wall about four feet high, and found ourselves upon pasture-land which led, sometimes by gradual ascents and sometimes by bits of rough climbing, to the spot we wished to reach. We were afraid we were a little late, and therefore hurried on, running up the grassy hills and bounding briskly over the rough and rocky places. I carried a knapsack strapped firmly to my shoulders, and under my wife's arm was a large, soft basket of a kind much used by tourists. Her arm was passed through the handles and around the bottom of the basket, which she pressed closely to her side. This was the way she always carried it. The basket contained two bottles of wine, one sweet for my wife, and

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another a little acid for myself. Sweet wines give me the headache.

When we reached the grassy bluff, well known thereabouts to lovers of sunset views, I stepped immediately to the edge to gaze upon the scene ; but my wife sat down to take a sip of wine, for she was very thirsty, and then, leaving her basket, she came to my side. The scene was indeed one of great beauty. Beneath us stretched a wide valley of many shades of green, with a little river running through it, and red-tiled houses here and there. Beyond rose a range of mountains, pink, pale green, and purple where their tips caught the reflection of the setting sun, and of a rich gray-green in shadows. Beyond all was the blue Italian sky, illuminated by an especially fine sunset.

My wife and I are Americans, and at the time of this story were middle-aged people, and very fond of seeing in each other's company whatever there was of interest or beauty around us. We had a son about twenty-two years old, of whom we were also very fond, but he was not with us, being at that time a student in Germany. Although we had good health, we were not very robust people, and, under ordinary circumstances, not given to long country tramps. I was of medium size, without much muscular development, while my wife was quite stout, and growing stouter.

The reader may, perhaps, be somewhat surprised that a middle-aged couple, not very strong or very good walkers, the lady loaded with a basket containing two bottles of wine and a metal drinking-cup, and the gentleman carrying a heavy knapsack, filled with

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all sorts of odds and ends, strapped to his shoulders, should set off on a seven-mile walk, jump over a wall, run up a hillside, and yet feel in very good trim to enjoy a sunset view. This peculiar state of things I will proceed to explain.

I had been a professional man, but some years before had retired upon a very comfortable income. I had always been very fond of scientific pursuits, and now made these the occupation and pleasure of much of my leisure time. Our home was in a small town, and in a corner of my grounds I built a laboratory, where I carried on my work and my experiments. I had long been anxious to discover the means, not only of producing, but of retaining and controlling, a natural force, really the same as centrifugal force, but which I called negative gravity. This name I adopted because it indicated better than any other the action of the force in question, as I produced it. Positive gravity attracts everything toward the centre of the earth. Negative gravity, therefore, would be that power which repels everything from the centre of the earth, just as the negative pole of a magnet repels the needle, while the positive pole attracts it. My object was, in fact, to store centrifugal force, and to render it constant, controllable, and available for use. The advantages of such a discovery could scarcely be described. In a word, it would lighten the burdens of the world.

I will not touch upon the labors and disappointments of several years. It is enough to say that at last I discovered a method of producing, storing, and controlling negative gravity.

The mechanism of my invention was rather compli-

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cated, but the method of operating it was very simple. A strong metallic case, about eight inches long and half as wide, contained the machinery for producing the force, and this was put into action by means of the pressure of a screw worked from the outside. As soon as this pressure was produced, negative gravity began to be evolved and stored, and the greater the pressure the greater the force. As the screw was moved outward, and the pressure diminished, the force decreased, and when the screw was withdrawn to its fullest extent, the action of negative gravity entirely ceased. Thus this force could be produced or dissipated at will to such degrees as might be desired, and its action, so long as the requisite pressure was maintained, was constant.

When this little apparatus worked to my satisfaction I called my wife into my laboratory and explained to her my invention and its value. She had known that I had been at work with an important object, but I had never told her what it was. I had said that if I succeeded I would tell her all, but if I failed she need not be troubled with the matter at all. Being a very sensible woman, this satisfied her perfectly. Now I explained everything to her, the construction of the machine, and the wonderful uses to which this invention could be applied. I told her that it could diminish, or entirely dissipate, the weight of objects of any kind. A heavily loaded wagon, with two of these instruments fastened to its sides, and each screwed to a proper force, would be so lifted and supported that it would press upon the ground as lightly as an empty cart, and a small horse could draw it with ease. A bale of cotton, with one of these machines attached,

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could be handled and carried by a boy. A car, with a number of these machines, could be made to rise in the air like a balloon. Everything, in fact, that was heavy could be made light. And as a great part of labor, all over the world, is caused by the attraction of gravitation, so this repellent force, wherever applied, would make weight less and work easier. I told her of many, many ways in which the invention might be used, and would have told her of many more if she had not suddenly burst into tears.

“The world has gained something wonderful,” she exclaimed, between her sobs, “but I have lost a husband !”

“What do you mean by that ?” I asked, in surprise.

“I haven’t minded it so far,” she said, “because it gave you something to do, and it pleased you, and it never interfered with our home pleasures and our home life. But now that is all over. You will never be your own master again. It will succeed, I am sure, and you may make a great deal of money, but we don’t need money. What we need is the happiness which we have always had until now. Now there will be companies, and patents, and lawsuits, and experiments, and people calling you a humbug, and other people saying they discovered it long ago, and all sorts of persons coming to see you, and you’ll be obliged to go to all sorts of places, and you will be an altered man, and we shall never be happy again. Millions of money will not repay us for the happiness we should lose.”

These words of my wife struck me with much force. Before I had called her my mind had begun to be filled and perplexed with ideas of what I ought to do

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now that the great invention was perfected. Until now the matter had not troubled me at all. Sometimes I had gone backward and sometimes forward, but, on the whole, I had always felt encouraged. I had taken great pleasure in the work, but I had never allowed myself to be too much absorbed by it. But now everything was different. I began to feel that it was due to myself and to my fellow-beings that I should properly put this invention before the world. And how should I set about it? What steps should I take? I must make no mistakes. When the matter should become known hundreds of scientific people might set themselves to work. How could I tell but that they might discover other methods of producing the same effect? I must guard myself against a great many things. I must get patents in all parts of the world. Already, as I have said, my mind began to be troubled and perplexed with these things. A turmoil of this sort did not suit my age nor disposition. I could not but agree with my wife that the joys of a quiet and contented life were now about to be broken into.

“My dear,” said I, “I believe, with you, that the thing will do us more harm than good. If it were not for depriving the world of the invention, I would throw the whole thing to the winds. And yet,” I added regretfully, “I had expected a great deal of personal gratification from the use of this invention.”

“Now, listen,” said my wife, eagerly. “Don’t you think it would be best to do this—use the thing as much as you please for your own amusement and satisfaction, but let the world wait? It has waited a long time, and let it wait a little longer. When we are

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dead let Herbert have the invention. He will then be old enough to judge for himself whether it will be better to take advantage of it for his own profit, or simply to give it to the public for nothing. It would be cheating him if we were to do the latter, but it would also be doing him a great wrong if we were, at his age, to load him with such a heavy responsibility. Besides, if he took it up, you could not help going into it, too."

I took my wife's advice. I wrote a careful and complete account of the invention, and, sealing it up, I gave it to my lawyers to be handed to my son after my death. If he died first, I would make other arrangements. Then I determined to get all the good and fun out of the thing that was possible without telling any one anything about it. Even Herbert, who was away from home, was not to be told of the invention.

The first thing I did was to buy a strong leather knapsack, and inside of this I fastened my little machine, with a screw so arranged that it could be worked from the outside. Strapping this firmly to my shoulders, my wife gently turned the screw at the back until the upward tendency of the knapsack began to lift and sustain me. When I felt myself so gently supported and upheld that I seemed to weigh about thirty or forty pounds, I would set out for a walk. The knapsack did not raise me from the ground, but it gave me a very buoyant step. It was no labor at all to walk. It was a delight, an ecstasy. With the strength of a man and the weight of a child, I gayly strode along. The first day I walked half a dozen miles at a very brisk pace, and came back with-

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out feeling in the least degree tired. These walks now became one of the greatest joys of my life. When nobody was looking, I would bound over a fence, sometimes just touching it with one hand, and sometimes not touching it at all. I delighted in rough places. I sprang over streams. I jumped and I ran. I felt like Mercury himself.

I now set about making another machine, so that my wife could accompany me in my walks. But when it was finished she positively refused to use it. "I can't wear a knapsack," she said, "and there is no other good way of fastening it to me. Besides, everybody about here knows I am no walker, and it would only set them talking."

I occasionally made use of this second machine, but I will only give one instance of its application. Some repairs were needed to the foundation-walls of my barn, and a two-horse wagon, loaded with building-stone, had been brought into my yard and left there. In the evening, when the men had gone away, I took my two machines and fastened them with strong chains, one on each side of the loaded wagon. Then, gradually turning the screws, the wagon was so lifted that its weight became very greatly diminished. We had an old donkey which used to belong to Herbert, and which was now occasionally used with a small cart to bring packages from the station. I went into the barn and put the harness on the little fellow, and, bringing him out to the wagon, I attached him to it. In this position he looked very funny, with a long pole sticking out in front of him and the great wagon behind him. When all was ready, I touched him up, and, to my great delight, he moved off with the two-

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horse load of stone as easily as if he were drawing his own cart. I led him out into the public road, along which he proceeded without difficulty. He was an opinionated little beast, and sometimes stopped, not liking the peculiar manner in which he was harnessed. But a touch of the switch made him move on, and I soon turned him and brought the wagon back into the yard. This determined the success of my invention in one of its most important uses, and with a satisfied heart I put the donkey into the stable and went into the house.

Our trip to Europe was made a few months after this, and was mainly on account of our son Herbert. He, poor fellow, was in great trouble, and so, therefore, were we. He had become engaged, with our full consent, to a young lady of our town, the daughter of a gentleman whom we esteemed very highly. Herbert was young to be engaged to be married, but as we felt that he would not find another girl to make him so good a wife, we were entirely satisfied, especially as it was agreed on all hands that the marriage was not to take place for some time. It seemed to us that in marrying Janet Gilbert, Herbert would secure for himself, in the very beginning of his career, the most important element of a happy life. But suddenly, without any reason that seemed to us justifiable, Mr. Gilbert, the only surviving parent of Janet, broke off the match, and he and his daughter soon after left the town for a trip to the West.

This blow nearly broke poor Herbert's heart. He gave up his professional studies and came home to us, and for a time we thought he would be seriously ill. Then we took him to Europe, and after a Continen-

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tal tour of a month or two we left him, at his own request, in Göttingen, where he thought it would do him good to go to work again. Then we went down to the little town in Italy where my story first finds us. My wife had suffered much in mind and body on her son's account, and for this reason I was anxious that she should take outdoor exercise, and enjoy as much as possible the bracing air of the country. I had brought with me both my little machines. One was still in my knapsack, and the other I had fastened to the inside of an enormous family trunk. As one is obliged to pay for nearly every pound of his baggage on the Continent, this saved me a great deal of money. Everything heavy was packed into this great trunk —books, papers, the bronze, iron, and marble relics we had picked up, and all the articles that usually weigh down a tourist's baggage. I screwed up the negative gravity apparatus until the trunk could be handled with great ease by an ordinary porter. I could have made it weigh nothing at all, but this, of course, I did not wish to do. The lightness of my baggage, however, had occasioned some comment, and I had overheard remarks which were not altogether complimentary about people travelling around with empty trunks. But this only amused me.

Desirous that my wife should have the advantage of negative gravity while taking our walks, I had removed the machine from the trunk and fastened it inside of the basket, which she could carry under her arm. This assisted her wonderfully. When one arm was tired she put the basket under the other, and thus, with one hand on my arm, she could easily keep up with the free and buoyant steps my knapsack en-

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abled me to take. She did not object to long tramps here, because nobody knew that she was not a walker, and she always carried some wine or other refreshment in the basket, not only because it was pleasant to have it with us, but because it seemed ridiculous to go about carrying an empty basket.

There were English-speaking people stopping at the hotel where we were, but they seemed more fond of driving than walking, and none of them offered to accompany us on our rambles, for which we were very glad. There was one man, however, who was a great walker. He was an Englishman, a member of an Alpine club, and generally went about dressed in a knickerbocker suit, with gray woollen stockings covering an enormous pair of calves. One evening this gentleman was talking to me and some others about the ascent of the Matterhorn, and I took occasion to deliver in pretty strong language my opinion upon such exploits. I declared them to be useless, foolhardy, and, if the climber had any one who loved him, wicked.

“Even if the weather should permit a view,” I said, “what is that compared to the terrible risk to life? Under certain circumstances,” I added (thinking of a kind of waistcoat I had some idea of making, which, set about with little negative-gravity machines, all connected with a conveniently handled screw, would enable the wearer at times to dispense with his weight altogether), “such ascents might be divested of danger, and be quite admissible. But ordinarily they should be frowned upon by the intelligent public.”

The Alpine club man looked at me, especially regarding my somewhat slight figure and thinnish legs.

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“It’s all very well for you to talk that way,” he said, “because it is easy to see that you are not up to that sort of thing.”

“In conversations of this kind,” I replied, “I never make personal allusions. But since you have chosen to do so, I feel inclined to invite you to walk with me to-morrow to the top of the mountain to the north of this town.”

“I’ll do it,” he said, “at any time you choose to name.” And, as I left the room soon afterwards, I heard him laugh.

The next afternoon, about two o’clock, the Alpine club man and I set out for the mountain.

“What have you got in your knapsack?” he said.

“A hammer to use if I come across geological specimens, a field-glass, a flask of wine, and some other things.”

“I wouldn’t carry any weight, if I were you,” he said.

“Oh, I don’t mind it,” I answered, and off we started.

The mountain to which we were bound was about two miles from the town. Its nearest side was steep, and in places almost precipitous, but it sloped away more gradually toward the north, and up that side a road led by devious windings to a village near the summit. It was not a very high mountain, but it would do for an afternoon’s climb.

“I suppose you want to go up by the road,” said my companion.

“Oh, no,” I answered, “we won’t go so far around as that. There is a path up this side, along which I

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have seen men driving their goats. I prefer to take that."

"All right, if you say so," he answered, with a smile. "But you'll find it pretty tough."

After a time he remarked :

"I wouldn't walk so fast, if I were you."

"Oh, I like to step along briskly," I said. And briskly on we went.

My wife had screwed up the machine in the knapsack more than usual, and walking seemed scarcely any effort at all. I carried a long alpenstock, and when we reached the mountain and began the ascent, I found that with the help of this and my knapsack I could go uphill at a wonderful rate. My companion had taken the lead, so as to show me how to climb. Making a detour over some rocks, I quickly passed him and went ahead. After that it was impossible for him to keep up with me. I ran up steep places, I cut off the windings of the path by lightly clambering over rocks, and even when I followed the beaten track my step was as rapid as if I had been walking on level ground.

"Look here!" shouted the Alpine club man from below. "You'll kill yourself if you go at that rate! That's no way to climb mountains!"

"It's my way!" I cried, and on I skipped.

Twenty minutes after I arrived at the summit, my companion joined me, puffing, and wiping his red face with his handkerchief.

"Confound it!" he cried, "I never came up a mountain so fast in my life."

"You need not have hurried," I said coolly.

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"I was afraid something would happen to you," he growled, "and I wanted to stop you. I never saw a person climb in such an utterly absurd way."

"I don't see why you should call it absurd," I said, smiling with an air of superiority. "I arrived here in a perfectly comfortable condition, neither heated nor wearied."

He made no answer, but walked off to a little distance, fanning himself with his hat and growling words which I did not catch. After a time I proposed to descend.

"You must be careful as you go down," he said. "It is much more dangerous to go down steep places than to climb up."

"I am always prudent," I answered, and started in advance. I found the descent of the mountain much more pleasant than the ascent. It was positively exhilarating. I jumped from rocks and bluffs eight and ten feet in height, and touched the ground as gently as if I had stepped down but two feet. I ran down steep paths, and, with the aid of my alpenstock, stopped myself in an instant. I was careful to avoid dangerous places, but the runs and jumps I made were such as no man had ever made before upon that mountain-side. Once only I heard my companion's voice. "You'll break your — neck!" he yelled.

"Never fear!" I called back, and soon left him far above.

When I reached the bottom I would have waited for him, but my activity had warmed me up, and as a cool evening breeze was beginning to blow I thought it better not to stop and take cold. Half an hour after my arrival at the hotel I came down to the

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court, cool, fresh, and dressed for dinner, and just in time to meet the Alpine man as he entered, hot, dusty, and growling.

“Excuse me for not waiting for you,” I said. But without stopping to hear my reason, he muttered something about waiting in a place where no one would care to stay, and passed into the house.

There was no doubt that what I had done gratified my pique and tickled my vanity.

“I think now,” I said, when I related the matter to my wife, “that he will scarcely say that I am not up to that sort of thing.”

“I am not sure,” she answered, “that it was exactly fair. He did not know how you were assisted.”

“It was fair enough,” I said. “He is enabled to climb well by the inherited vigor of his constitution and by his training. He did not tell me what methods of exercise he used to get those great muscles upon his legs. I am enabled to climb by the exercise of my intellect. My method is my business, and his method is his business. It is all perfectly fair.”

Still she persisted :

“He *thought* that you climbed with your legs, and not with your head.”

Now, after this long digression, necessary to explain how a middle-aged couple of slight pedestrian ability, and loaded with a heavy knapsack and basket, should have started out on a rough walk and climb, fourteen miles in all, we will return to ourselves, standing on the little bluff and gazing out upon the sunset view. When the sky began to fade a little we turned from it and prepared to go back to the town.

“Where is the basket?” I said.

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"I left it right here," answered my wife. "I unscrewed the machine and it lay perfectly flat."

"Did you afterwards take out the bottles?" I asked, seeing them lying on the grass.

"Yes, I believe I did. I had to take out yours in order to get at mine."

"Then," said I, after looking all about the grassy patch on which we stood, "I am afraid you did not entirely unscrew the instrument, and that when the weight of the bottles was removed the basket gently rose into the air."

"It may be so," she said lugubriously. "The basket was behind me as I drank my wine."

"I believe that is just what has happened," I said. "Look up there! I vow that is our basket!"

I pulled out my field-glass and directed it at a little speck high above our heads. It was the basket floating high in the air. I gave the glass to my wife to look, but she did not want to use it.

"What shall I do?" she cried. "I can't walk home without that basket. It's perfectly dreadful!" And she looked as if she was going to cry.

"Do not distress yourself," I said, although I was a good deal disturbed myself. "We shall get home very well. You shall put your hand on my shoulder, while I put my arm around you. Then you can screw up my machine a good deal higher, and it will support us both. In this way I am sure that we shall get on very well."

We carried out this plan, and managed to walk on with moderate comfort. To be sure, with the knapsack pulling me upward, and the weight of my wife pulling me down, the straps hurt me somewhat, which

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they had not done before. We did not spring lightly over the wall into the road, but, still clinging to each other, we clambered awkwardly over it. The road for the most part declined gently toward the town, and with moderate ease we made our way along it. But we walked much more slowly than we had done before, and it was quite dark when we reached our hotel. If it had not been for the light inside the court it would have been difficult for us to find it.

A travelling-carriage was standing before the entrance and against the light. It was necessary to pass around it, and my wife went first. I attempted to follow her, but, strange to say, there was nothing under my feet. I stepped vigorously, but only wagged my legs in the air. To my horror, I found that I was rising in the air ! I soon saw, by the light below me, that I was about fifteen feet from the ground. The carriage drove away, and in the darkness I was not noticed. Of course I knew what had happened. The instrument in my knapsack had been screwed up to such an intensity, in order to support both myself and my wife, that when her weight was removed the force of the negative gravity was sufficient to raise me from the ground. But I was glad to find that when I had risen to the height I have mentioned I did not go up any higher, but hung in the air, about on a level with the second tier of windows of the hotel.

I now began to try to reach the screw in my knapsack, in order to reduce the force of the negative gravity, but, do what I would, I could not get my hand to it. The machine in the knapsack had been placed so as to support me in a well-balanced and comfortable way, and in doing this it had been im-

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possible to set the screw so that I could reach it. But in a temporary arrangement of the kind this had not been considered necessary, as my wife always turned the screw for me until sufficient lifting power had been attained. I had intended, as I have said before, to construct a negative-gravity waistcoat, in which the screw should be in front, and entirely under the wearer's control. But this was a thing of the future.

When I found that I could not turn the screw I began to be much alarmed. Here I was, dangling in the air, without any means of reaching the ground. I could not expect my wife to return to look for me, as she would naturally suppose I had stopped to speak to some one. I thought of loosening myself from the knapsack, but this would not do, for I should fall heavily, and either kill myself or break some of my bones. I did not dare to call for assistance, for if any of the simple-minded inhabitants of the town had discovered me floating in the air they would have taken me for a demon, and would probably have shot at me.

A moderate breeze was blowing, and it wafted me gently down the street. If it had blown me against a tree I would have seized it, and have endeavored, so to speak, to climb down it. But there were no trees. There was a dim street lamp here and there, but reflectors above them threw their light upon the pavement, and none up to me. On many accounts I was glad that the night was so dark, for, much as I desired to get down, I wanted no one to see me in my strange position, which, to any one but myself and wife, would be utterly unaccountable. If I could rise as high as the roofs I might get on one of them, and, tearing off an armful of tiles, so load myself that I would be

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heavy enough to descend. But I did not rise to the eaves of any of the houses. If there had been a telegraph-pole, or anything of the kind that I could have clung to, I would have taken off the knapsack, and would have endeavored to scramble down as well as I could. But there was nothing I could cling to. Even the water-spouts, if I could have reached the face of the houses, were embedded in the walls.

At an open window, near which I was slowly blown, I saw two little boys going to bed by the light of a dim candle. I greatly feared they would see me and raise an alarm. I actually came so near to the window that I threw out one foot and pushed against the wall with such force that I went nearly across the street. I thought I caught sight of a frightened look on the face of one of the boys. But of this I am not sure, and I heard no cries. I still floated, dangling, down the street. What was to be done? Should I call out? In that case, if I were not shot or stoned, my strange predicament, and the secret of my invention, would be exposed to the world. If I did not do this, I must either let myself drop and be killed or mangled, or hang there and die. When, during the course of the night, the air became more rarefied, I might rise higher and higher, perhaps to an altitude of one or two hundred feet. It would then be impossible for the people to reach me and get me down, even if they were convinced that I was not a demon. I should then expire, and when the birds of the air had eaten all of me that they could devour, I should forever hang above the unlucky town, a dangling skeleton with a knapsack on its back.

Such thoughts were not reassuring, and I determined

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that if I could find no means of getting down without assistance, I would call out and run all risks. But so long as I could endure the tension of the straps I would hold out and hope for a tree or a pole. Perhaps it might rain, and my wet clothes would then become so heavy that I would descend as low as the top of a lamp-post.

As this thought was passing through my mind I saw a spark of light upon the street, approaching me. I rightly imagined that it came from a tobacco-pipe, and presently I heard a voice. It was that of the Alpine club man. Of all people in the world, I did not want him to discover me, and I hung as motionless as possible. The man was speaking to another person who was walking with him.

“He is crazy beyond a doubt,” said the Alpine man. “Nobody but a maniac could have gone up and down that mountain as he did! He hasn’t any muscles, and one need only look at him to know that he couldn’t do any climbing in a natural way. It is only the excitement of insanity that gives him strength.”

The two now stopped almost under me, and the speaker continued:

“Such things are very common with maniacs. At times they acquire an unnatural strength which is perfectly wonderful. I have seen a little fellow struggle and fight so that four strong men could not hold him.”

Then the other person spoke.

“I am afraid what you say is too true,” he remarked. “Indeed, I have known it for some time.”

At these words my breath almost stopped. It was the voice of Mr. Gilbert, my townsman, and the father of Janet. It must have been he who had arrived in

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the travelling-carriage. He was acquainted with the Alpine club man, and they were talking of me. Proper or improper, I listened with all my ears.

“It is a very sad case,” Mr. Gilbert continued. “My daughter was engaged to marry his son, but I broke off the match. I could not have her marry the son of a lunatic, and there could be no doubt of his condition. He has been seen—a man of his age, and the head of a family—to load himself up with a heavy knapsack, which there was no earthly necessity for him to carry, and go skipping along the road for miles, vaulting over fences and jumping over rocks and ditches like a young calf or a colt. I myself saw a most heartrending instance of how a kindly man’s nature can be changed by the derangement of his intellect. I was at some distance from his house, but I plainly saw him harness a little donkey, which he owns, to a large two-horse wagon loaded with stone, and beat and lash the poor little beast until it drew the heavy load some distance along the public road. I would have remonstrated with him on this horrible cruelty, but he had the wagon back in his yard before I could reach him.”

“Oh, there can be no doubt of his insanity,” said the Alpine club man, “and he oughtn’t to be allowed to travel about in this way. Some day he will pitch his wife over a precipice just for the fun of seeing her shoot through the air.”

“I am sorry he is here,” said Mr. Gilbert, “for it would be very painful to meet him. My daughter and I will retire very soon, and go away as early to-morrow morning as possible, so as to avoid seeing him.”

And then they walked back to the hotel.

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For a few moments I hung, utterly forgetful of my condition, and absorbed in the consideration of these revelations. One idea now filled my mind. Everything must be explained to Mr. Gilbert, even if it should be necessary to have him called to me, and for me to speak to him from the upper air.

Just then I saw something white approaching me along the road. My eyes had become accustomed to the darkness, and I perceived that it was an upturned face. I recognized the hurried gait, the form. It was my wife. As she came near me I called her name, and in the same breath entreated her not to scream. It must have been an effort for her to restrain herself, but she did it.

"You must help me to get down," I said, "without anybody seeing us."

"What shall I do?" she whispered.

"Try to catch hold of this string."

Taking a piece of twine from my pocket, I lowered one end to her. But it was too short—she could not reach it. I then tied my handkerchief to it, but still it was not long enough.

"I can get more string, or handkerchiefs," she whispered hurriedly.

"No," I said. "You could not get them up to me. But, leaning against the hotel wall on this side, in the corner, just inside of the garden gate, are some fishing-poles. I have seen them there every day. You can easily find them in the dark. Go, please, and bring me one of those."

The hotel was not far away, and in a few minutes my wife returned with a fishing-pole. She stood on tiptoe and reached it high in air, but all she could

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do was to strike my feet and legs with it. My most frantic exertions did not enable me to get my hands low enough to touch it.

“Wait a minute,” she said, and the rod was withdrawn.

I knew what she was doing. There was a hook and line attached to the pole, and with womanly dexterity she was fastening the hook to the extreme end of the rod. Soon she reached up and gently struck at my legs. After a few attempts the hook caught in my trousers, a little below my right knee. Then there was a slight pull, a long scratch down my leg, and the hook was stopped by the top of my boot. Then came a steady downward pull, and I felt myself descending. Gently and firmly the rod was drawn down, carefully the lower end was kept free from the ground, and in a few moments my ankle was seized with a vigorous grasp. Then some one seemed to climb up me, my feet touched the ground, an arm was thrown around my neck, the hand of another arm was busy at the back of my knapsack, and I soon stood firmly in the road, entirely divested of negative gravity.

“Oh, that I should have forgotten,” sobbed my wife, “and that I should have dropped your arm, and let you go up into the air! At first I thought you had stopped below, and it was only a little while ago that the truth flashed upon me. Then I rushed out and began looking up for you. I knew you had wax matches in your pocket, and hoped that you would keep on striking them, so that you would be seen.”

“But I did not wish to be seen,” I said, as we hurried to the hotel, “and I can never be sufficiently

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thankful that it was you who found me and brought me down. Do you know that it is Mr. Gilbert and his daughter who have just arrived? I must see him instantly. I will explain it all to you when I come up-stairs."

I took off my knapsack and gave it to my wife, who carried it to our room, while I went to look for Mr. Gilbert. Fortunately I found him just as he was about to go up to his chamber. He took my offered hand, but looked at me sadly and gravely.

"Mr. Gilbert," I said, "I must speak to you in private. Let us step into this room. There is no one here."

"My friend," said Mr. Gilbert, "it will be much better to avoid discussing this subject. It is very painful to both of us, and no good can come from talking of it."

"You cannot now comprehend what it is I want to say to you," I replied. "Come in here, and in a few minutes you will be very glad that you listened to me."

My manner was so earnest and impressive that Mr. Gilbert was constrained to follow me, and we went into a small room called the smoking-room, but in which people seldom smoked, and closed the door. I immediately began my statement. I told my old friend that I had discovered, by means that I need not explain at present, that he had considered me crazy, and that now the most important object of my life was to set myself right in his eyes. I thereupon gave him the whole history of my invention, and explained the reason of the actions that had appeared to him those of a lunatic. I said nothing about the

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little incident of that evening. That was a mere accident, and I did not care now to speak of it.

Mr. Gilbert listened to me very attentively.

“Your wife is here?” he asked, when I had finished.

“Yes,” I said, “and she will corroborate my story in every item, and no one could ever suspect her of being crazy. I will go and bring her to you.”

In a few minutes my wife was in the room, had shaken hands with Mr. Gilbert, and had been told of my suspected madness. She turned pale, but smiled.

“He did act like a crazy man,” she said, “but I never supposed that anybody would think him one.” And tears came into her eyes.

“Now, my dear,” said I, “perhaps you will tell Mr. Gilbert how I did all this.”

Then she told him the story I had told.

Mr. Gilbert looked from the one to the other of us with a troubled air.

“Of course I do not doubt either of you, or rather I do not doubt that you believe what you say. All would be right if I could bring myself to credit that such a force as that you speak of can possibly exist.”

“That is a matter,” said I, “which I can easily prove to you by actual demonstration. If you can wait a short time, until my wife and I have had something to eat,—for I am nearly famished, and I am sure she must be,—I will set your mind at rest upon that point.”

“I will wait here,” said Mr. Gilbert, “and smoke a cigar. Don’t hurry yourselves. I shall be glad to have some time to think about what you have told me.”

When we had finished the dinner which had been

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set aside for us, I went up-stairs and got my knapsack, and we both joined Mr. Gilbert in the smoking-room. I showed him the little machine, and explained, very briefly, the principle of its construction. I did not give any practical demonstration of its action, because there were people walking about the corridor who might at any moment come into the room. But, looking out of the window, I saw that the night was much clearer. The wind had dissipated the clouds, and the stars were shining brightly.

“If you will come up the street with me,” said I to Mr. Gilbert, “I will show you how this thing works.”

“That is just what I want to see,” he answered.

“I will go with you,” said my wife, throwing a shawl over her head. And we started up the street.

When we were outside the little town I found the starlight was quite sufficient for my purpose. The white roadway, the low walls, and objects about us could easily be distinguished.

“Now,” said I to Mr. Gilbert, “I want to put this knapsack on you, and let you know how it feels, and how it will help you to walk.” To this he assented with some eagerness, and I strapped it firmly on him. “I will now turn this screw,” said I, “until you shall become lighter and lighter.”

“Be very careful not to turn it too much,” said my wife, earnestly.

“Oh, you may depend on me for that,” said I, turning the screw very gradually.

Mr. Gilbert was a stout man, and I was obliged to give the screw a good many turns.

“There seems to be considerable hoist in it,” he said directly. Then I put my arms around him, and

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found that I could raise him from the ground. "Are you lifting me?" he exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes. I did it with ease," I answered.

"Upon—my—word!" ejaculated Mr. Gilbert.

I then gave the screw a half-turn more, and told him to walk and run. He started off, at first slowly, then he made long strides, then he began to run, and then to skip and to jump. It had been many years since Mr. Gilbert had skipped and jumped. No one was in sight, and he was free to gambol as much as he pleased. "Could you give it another turn?" said he, bounding up to me. "I want to try that wall." I put on a little more negative gravity, and he vaulted over a five-foot wall with great ease. In an instant he had leaped back into the road, and in two bounds was at my side. "I came down as light as a cat," he said. "There was never anything like it." And away he went up the road, taking steps at least eight feet long, leaving my wife and me laughing heartily at the preternatural agility of our stout friend. In a few minutes he was with us again. "Take it off," he said. "If I wear it any longer I shall want one myself, and then I shall be taken for a crazy man, and perhaps clapped into an asylum."

"Now," said I, as I turned back the screw before unstrapping the knapsack, "do you understand how I took long walks, and leaped and jumped, how I ran uphill and downhill, and how the little donkey drew the loaded wagon?"

"I understand it all," cried he. "I take back all I ever said or thought about you, my friend."

"And Herbert may marry Janet?" cried my wife.

"*May* marry her!" cried Mr. Gilbert. "Indeed he

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shall marry her, if I have anything to say about it ! My poor girl has been drooping ever since I told her it could not be."

My wife rushed at him, but whether she embraced him or only shook his hands I cannot say, for I had the knapsack in one hand, and was rubbing my eyes with the other.

"But, my dear fellow," said Mr. Gilbert, presently, "if you still consider it to your interest to keep your invention a secret, I wish you had never made it. No one having a machine like that can help using it, and it is often quite as bad to be considered a maniac as to be one."

"My friend," I cried, with some excitement, "I have made up my mind on this subject. The little machine in this knapsack, which is the only one I now possess, has been a great pleasure to me. But I now know it has also been of the greatest injury indirectly to me and mine, not to mention some direct inconvenience and danger, which I will speak of another time. The secret lies with us three, and we will keep it. But the invention itself is too full of temptation and danger for any of us."

As I said this I held the knapsack with one hand while I quickly turned the screw with the other. In a few moments it was high above my head, while I with difficulty held it down by the straps. "Look !" I cried. And then I released my hold, and the knapsack shot into the air and disappeared into the upper gloom.

I was about to make a remark, but had no chance, for my wife threw herself upon my bosom, sobbing with joy.

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"Oh, I am so glad—so glad!" she said. "And you will never make another?"

"Never another!" I answered.

"And now let us hurry in and see Janet," said my wife.

"You don't know how heavy and clumsy I feel," said Mr. Gilbert, striving to keep up with us as we walked back. "If I had worn that thing much longer, I should never have been willing to take it off!"

Janet had retired, but my wife went up to her room.

"I think she has felt it as much as our boy," she said, when she rejoined me. "But I tell you, my dear, I left a very happy girl in that little bed-chamber over the garden."

And there were three very happy elderly people talking together until quite late that evening. "I shall write to Herbert to-night," I said, when we separated, "and tell him to meet us all in Geneva. It will do the young man no harm if we interrupt his studies just now."

"You must let me add a postscript to the letter," said Mr. Gilbert, "and I am sure it will require no knapsack with a screw in the back to bring him quickly to us."

And it did not.

There is a wonderful pleasure in tripping over the earth like a winged Mercury, and in feeling one's self relieved of much of that attraction of gravitation which drags us down to earth, and gradually makes the movement of our bodies but weariness and labor. But this pleasure is not to be compared, I think, to

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that given by the buoyancy and lightness of two young and loving hearts, reunited after a separation which they had supposed would last forever.

What became of the basket and the knapsack, whether they ever met in upper air or not, I do not know. If they but float away and stay away from ken of mortal man, I shall be satisfied.

And whether or not the world will ever know more of the power of negative gravity depends entirely upon the disposition of my son Herbert, when—after a good many years, I hope—he shall open the packet my lawyers have in keeping.

[NOTE. It would be quite useless for any one to interview my wife on this subject, for she has entirely forgotten how my machine was made. As for Mr. Gilbert, he never knew.]

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ABOUT a hundred feet back from the main street of a village in New Jersey there stood a very good white house. Half-way between it and the sidewalk was a large chestnut-tree, which had been the pride of Mr. Himes, who built the house, and was now the pride of Mrs. Himes, his widow, who lived there.

Under the tree was a bench, and on the bench were two elderly men, both smoking pipes, and each one of them leaning forward with his elbows on his knees. One of these, Thomas Rooper by name, was a small man with gray side-whiskers, a rather thin face, and very good clothes. His pipe was a meerschaum, handsomely colored, with a long amber tip. He had bought this pipe while on a visit to Philadelphia during the great Centennial Exposition ; and if any one noticed it and happened to remark what a fine pipe it was, that person would be likely to receive a detailed account of the circumstances of its purchase, with an appendix relating to the Main Building, the Art Building, the Agricultural Building, and many other salient points of the great Exposition which commemorated the centennial of our national independence.

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The other man, Asaph Scantle, was of a different type. He was a little older than his companion, but if his hair were gray it did not show very much, as his rather long locks were of a sandy hue and his full face was clean-shaven—at least, on Wednesdays and Sundays. He was tall, round-shouldered, and his clothes were not good, possessing very evident claims to a position on the retired list. His pipe consisted of a common clay bowl with a long reed stem.

For some minutes the two men continued to puff together as if they were playing a duet upon tobacco-pipes, and then Asaph, removing his reed from his lips, remarked,

“What you ought to do, Thomas, is to marry money.”

“There’s sense in that,” replied the other, “but you wasn’t the first to think of it.”

Asaph, who knew very well that Mr. Rooper never allowed any one to suppose that he received suggestions from without, took no notice of the last remark, but went on: “Lookin’ at the matter in a friendly way, it seems to me it stands to reason that when the shingles on a man’s house is so rotten that the rain comes through into every room on the top floor, and when the plaster on the ceilin’ is tumblin’ down more or less all the time, and the window-sashes is all loose, and things generally in a condition that he can’t let that house without spendin’ at least a year’s rent on it to git it into decent order, and when a man’s got to the time of life—”

“There’s nothin’ the matter with the time of life,” said Thomas. “That’s all right.”

“What I was goin’ to say was,” continued Asaph, “that when a man gits to the time of life when he

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knows what it is to be comfortable in his mind as well as his body,—and that time comes to sensible people as soon as they git fairly growed up,—he don't want to give up his good room in the tavern and all the privileges of the house, and go to live on his own property, and have the plaster come down on his own head and the rain come down on the coverlet of his own bed."

"No, he don't," said Thomas, "and what is more, he isn't goin' to do it. But what I git from the rent of that house is what I have to live on. There's no gittin' around that p'int."

"Well, then," said Asaph, "if you don't marry money, what are you goin' to do? You can't go back to your old business."

"I never had but one business," said Thomas. "I lived with my folks until I was a good deal more than growed up, and when the war broke out I went as sutler to the regiment from this place. And all the money I made I put into my property in the village here. That's what I've lived on ever since. There's no more war, so there's no more sutlers, except away out West where I wouldn't go. And there are no more folks, for they are all dead. And if what Mrs. McJimsey says is true, there'll be no more tenants in my house after the first of next November. For when the McJimseys go on account of want of general repairs, it is not to be expected that anybody else will come there. There's nobody in this place that can stand as much as the McJimseys can."

"Consequently," said Asaph, deliberately filling his pipe, "it stands to reason that there ain't nothin' for you to do but marry money."

Thomas Rooper took his pipe from his mouth and

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sat up straight. Gazing steadfastly at his companion, he remarked, "If you think that is such a good thing to do, why don't you do it yourself? There can't be anybody much harder up than you are."

"The law's ag'in' my doin' it," said Asaph. "A man can't marry his sister."

"Are you thinkin' of Marietta Himes?" asked Mr. Rooper.

"That's the one I'm thinkin' of," said Asaph. "If you can think of anybody better, I'd like you to mention her."

Mr. Rooper did not immediately speak. He presently asked: "What do you call money?"

"Well," said Asaph, with a little hesitation, "considerin' the circumstances, I should say that in a case like this about fifteen hundred a year, a first-rate house, with not a loose shingle on it nor a crack anywhere, a good garden and an orchard, two cows, a piece of meadow-land on the other side of the creek, and all the clothes a woman need have, is money."

Thomas shrugged his shoulders. "Clothes!" he said. "If she marries she'll go out of black, and then she'll have to have new ones, and lots of 'em. That would make a big hole in her money, Asaph."

The other smiled. "I always knewed you was a far-seein' feller, Thomas, but it stands to reason that Marietta's got a lot of clothes that was on hand before she went into mournin', and she's not the kind of woman to waste 'em. She'll be twistin' 'em about and makin' 'em over to suit the fashions, and it won't be like her to be buyin' new colored goods when she's got plenty of 'em already."

There was now another pause in the conversation,

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and then Mr. Rooper remarked : "Mrs. Himes must be gettin' on pretty well in years."

"She's not a young woman," said Asaph. "But if she was much younger she wouldn't have you, and if she was much older you wouldn't have her. So it strikes me she's just about the right p'int."

"How old was John Himes when he died?" asked Thomas.

"I don't exactly know that, but he was a lot older than Marietta."

Thomas shook his head. "It strikes me," said he, "that John Himes had a hearty constitution and hadn't ought to died as soon as he did. He fell away a good deal in the last years of his life."

"Considerin' he died of consumption, he had a right to fall away," said Asaph. "If what you are drivin' at, Thomas, is that Marietta isn't a good housekeeper and hasn't the right sort of notions of feedin', look at me. I've lived with Marietta just about a year, and in that time I've gained forty-two pounds. Now, of course I ain't unreasonable, and don't mean to say that you would gain forty-two pounds in a year, 'cause you ain't got the frame and bone to put it on, but it wouldn't surprise me a bit if you was to gain twenty or even twenty-five pounds in eighteen months, anyway. And more than that you ought not to ask, Thomas, considerin' your height and general build."

"Isn't Marietta Himes a good deal of a free-thinker?" asked Thomas.

"A what?" cried Asaph. "You mean an infidel?"

"No," said Thomas, "I don't charge nobody with nothin' more than there's reason for. But they do

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say that she goes sometimes to one church and sometimes to another, and that if there was a Catholic church in this village she would go to that. And who's goin' to say where a woman will turn up when she don't know her own mind better than that?"

Asaph colored a little. "The place where Marietta will turn up," said he, warmly, "is on a front seat in the kingdom of heaven, and if the people that talk about her will mend their ways, they'll see that I am right. You need not trouble yourself about that, Thomas. Marietta Himes is pious to the heel."

Mr. Rooper now shifted himself a little on the bench and crossed one leg over the other. "Now look here, Asaph," he said, with a little more animation than he had yet shown, "supposin' all you say is true, have you got any reason to think that Mrs. Himes ain't satisfied with things as they are?"

"Yes, I have," said Asaph. "And I don't mind tellin' you that the thing she's least satisfied with is me. She wants a man in the house. That is nateral. She wouldn't be Marietta Himes if she didn't. When I come to live with her I thought the whole business was settled, but it isn't. I don't suit her. I don't say she's lookin' for another man, but if another man was to come along, and if he was the right kind of a man, it's my opinion she's ready for him. I wouldn't say this to everybody, but I say it to you, Thomas Rooper, 'cause I know what kind of a man you are."

Mr. Rooper did not return the compliment. "I don't wonder your sister ain't satisfied with you," he said, "for you go ahead of all the lazy men I ever saw yet. They was sayin' down at the tavern yesterday,

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only yesterday, that you could do less work in more time than anybody they ever saw before."

"There's two ways of workin'," said Asaph. "Some people work with their hands and some with their heads."

Thomas grimly smiled. "It strikes me," said he, "that the most head-work you do is with your jaws."

Asaph was not the man to take offence readily, especially when he considered it against his interest to do so, and he showed no resentment at this remark. "'Tain't so much my not makin' myself more generally useful," he said, "that Marietta objects to, though, of course, it could not be expected that a man that hasn't got any interest in property would keep workin' at it like a man that has got an interest in it, such as Marietta's husband would have. But it's my general appearance that she don't like. She's told me more than once she didn't so much mind my bein' lazy as lookin' lazy."

"I don't wonder she thinks that way," said Thomas. "But look here, Asaph, do you suppose that if Marietta Himes was to marry a man, he would really come into her property?"

"There ain't nobody that knows my sister better than I know her, and I can say, without any fear of bein' contradicted, that when she gives herself to a man the good will and fixtures will be included."

Thomas Rooper now leaned forward with his elbows on his knees without smoking, and Asaph Scantle leaned forward with his elbows on his knees without smoking. And thus they remained, saying nothing to each other, for the space of some ten minutes.

Asaph was a man who truly used his head a great

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deal more than he used his hands. He had always been a shiftless fellow, but he was no fool, and this his sister found out soon after she asked him to come and make his home with her. She had not done this because she wanted a man in the house, for she had lived two or three years without that convenience and had not felt the need of it. But she knew that Asaph was in very uncomfortable circumstances, and she had sent for him solely for his own good. The arrangement proved to be a very good one for her brother, but not a good one for her. She had always known that Asaph's head was his main dependence, but she was just beginning to discover that he liked to use his head so that other people's hands should work for him.

"There ain't nobody comin' to see your sister, is there?" asked Thomas, suddenly.

"Not a livin' soul," said Asaph, "except women, married folk, and children. But it's always surprised me that nobody did come. But just at this minute the field's clear and the gate's open."

"Well," said Mr. Rooper, "I'll think about it."

"That's right," said Asaph, rubbing his knees with his hands. "That's right. But now tell me, Thomas Rooper, supposin' you get Marietta, what are you goin' to do for me?"

"For you!" exclaimed the other. "What have you got to do with it?"

"A good deal," said Asaph. "If you get Marietta with her fifteen hundred a year, and it wouldn't surprise me if it was eighteen hundred, and her house and her garden and her cattle and her field and her furniture, with not a leg loose nor a scratch, you will

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get her because I proposed her to you, and because I backed you up afterwards. And now, then, I want to know what you are goin' to do for me?"

"What do you want?" asked Thomas.

"The first thing I want," said Asaph, "is a suit of clothes. These clothes is disgraceful."

"You are right there," said Mr. Rooper. "I wonder your sister lets you come around in front of the house. But what do you mean by clothes, winter clothes or summer clothes?"

"Winter," said Asaph, without hesitation. "I don't count summer clothes. And when I say a suit of clothes, I mean shoes and hat and underclothes."

Mr. Rooper gave a sniff. "I wonder you don't say overcoat," he remarked.

"I do say overcoat," replied Asaph. "A suit of winter clothes is a suit of clothes that you can go out into the weather in without missin' nothin'."

Mr. Rooper smiled sarcastically. "Is there anything else you want?" he asked.

"Yes," said Asaph, decidedly, "there is. I want an umbrella."

"Cotton or silk?"

Asaph hesitated. He had never had a silk umbrella in his hand in his life. He was afraid to strike too high, and he answered, "I want a good stout gingham."

Mr. Rooper nodded his head. "Very good," he said. "And is that all?"

"No," said Asaph, "it ain't all. There is one more thing I want, and that is a dictionary."

The other man rose to his feet. "Upon my word," he exclaimed, "I never before saw a man that would

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sell his sister for a dictionary. And what you want with a dictionary is past my conceevin'!"

"Well, it ain't past mine," said Asaph. "For more than ten years I have wanted a dictionary. If I had a dictionary I could make use of my head in a way that I can't now. There is books in this house, but amongst 'em there is no dictionary. If there had been one, I'd been a different man by this time from what I am now, and like as not Marietta wouldn't have wanted any other man in the house but me."

Mr. Rooper stood looking upon the ground, and Asaph, who had also arisen, waited for him to speak.

"You are a grasin' man, Asaph," said Thomas. "But there is another thing I'd like to know : if I give you them clothes, you don't want them before she's married?"

"Yes, I do," said Asaph. "If I come to the weddin', I can't wear these things. I have got to have them first."

Mr. Rooper gave his head a little twist. "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," said he.

"Yes," said Asaph. "And there's different cups and different lips. But what's more, if I was to be best man, which would be nateral, considerin' I'm your friend and her brother, you wouldn't want me standin' up in this rig. And that's puttin' it in your own point of view, Thomas."

"It strikes me," said the other, "that I could get a best man who would furnish his own clothes. But we will see about that. There's another thing, Asaph," he said abruptly. "What are Mrs. Himes's views concernin' pipes?"

This question startled and frightened Asaph. He

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knew that his sister could not abide the smell of tobacco and that Mr. Rooper was an inveterate smoker.

“That depends,” said he, “on the kind of tobacco. I don’t mind sayin’ that Marietta isn’t partial to the kind of tobacco I smoke. But I ain’t a moneyed man and I can’t afford to buy nothin’ but cheap stuff. But when it comes to a meerschaum pipe and the very finest Virginia or North Carolina smoking-tobacco, such as a moneyed man would be likely to use—”

At this moment there came from the house the sound of a woman’s voice, not loud, but clear and distinct, and it said “Asaph !”

This word sent through Mr. Rooper a gentle thrill such as he did not remember ever having felt before. There seemed to be in it a suggestion, a sort of prophecy, of what appeared to him as an undefined and chaotic bliss. He was not a fanciful man, but he could not help imagining himself standing alone under that chestnut-tree and that voice calling “Thomas.”

Upon Asaph the effect was different. The interruption was an agreeable one in one way, because it cut short his attempted explanation of the tobacco question, but in another way he knew that it meant the swinging of an axe, and that was not pleasant.

Mr. Rooper walked back to the tavern in a cogitative state of mind. “That Asaph Scantle,” he said to himself, “has got a head-piece, there’s no denyin’ it. If it had not been for him I do not believe I should have thought of his sister, at least not until the McJimseys had left my house, and then it might have been too late.”

Marietta Himes was a woman with a gentle voice and an appearance and demeanor indicative of a gen-

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eral softness of disposition, but beneath this mild exterior there was a great deal of firmness of purpose. Asaph had not seen very much of his sister since she had grown up and married, and when he had come to live with her he had thought he was going to have things pretty much his own way. But it was not long before he entirely changed his mind.

Mrs. Himes was of moderate height, pleasant countenance, and a figure inclined to plumpness. Her dark hair, in which there was not a line of gray, was brushed down smoothly on each side of her face, and her dress, while plain, was extremely neat. In fact, everything in the house and on the place was extremely neat, except Asaph.

She was in the bright little dining-room, which looked out on the flower-garden, preparing the table for supper, placing every plate, dish, glass, and cup with as much care and exactness as if a civil engineer had drawn a plan on the table-cloth with places marked for the position of each article.

As she finished her work by placing a chair on each side of the table, a quiet smile, the result of a train of thought in which she had been indulging for the past half-hour, stole over her face. She passed through the kitchen, with a glance at the stove to see if the tea-kettle had begun to boil, and going out of the back door, she walked over to the shed where her brother was splitting kindling-wood.

“Asaph,” said Mrs. Himes, “if I were to give you a good suit of clothes, would you promise me that you would never smoke when wearing them?”

Her brother looked at her in amazement. “Clothes!” he repeated.

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“Mr. Himes was about your size,” said his sister, “and he left a good many clothes, which are most of them very good and carefully packed away, so that I am sure there is not a moth-hole in any one of them. I have several times thought, Asaph, that I might give you some of his clothes. But it did seem to me a desecration to have the clothes of such a man, who was so particular and nice, filled and saturated with horrible tobacco smoke which he detested. But now you are getting to be so awful shabby, I do not see how I can stand it any longer. But one thing I will not do—I will not have Mr. Himes’s clothes smelling of tobacco as yours do, and not only your own tobacco, but Mr. Rooper’s.”

“I think,” said Asaph, “that you are not exactly right just there. What you smell about me is my smoke. Thomas Rooper never uses anything but the finest scented and delicatest brands. I think that if you come to get used to his tobacco smoke you would like it. But as to my takin’ off my clothes and puttin’ on a different suit every time I want to light my pipe, that’s pretty hard lines, it seems to me.”

“It would be a good deal easier to give up the pipe,” said his sister.

“I will do that,” said Asaph, “when you give up tea. But you know as well as I do that there’s no use of either of us a-tryin’ to change our comfortable habits at our time of life.”

“I kept on hoping,” said Mrs. Himes, “that you would feel yourself that you were not fit to be seen by decent people, and that you would go to work and earn at least enough money to buy yourself some clothes. But as you don’t seem inclined to do that, I

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thought I would make you this offer. But you must understand that I will not have you smoke in Mr. Himes's clothes."

Asaph stood thinking, the head of his axe resting upon the ground, a position which suited him. He was in a little perplexity. Marietta's proposition seemed to interfere somewhat with the one he had made to Thomas Rooper. Here was a state of affairs which required most careful consideration. "I've been arrangin' about some clothes," he said presently, "for I know very well I need 'em, but I don't know just yet how it will turn out."

"I hope, Asaph," said Marietta, quickly, "that you are not thinking of going into debt for clothing, and I know that you haven't been working to earn money. What arrangements have you been making?"

"That's my private affair," said Asaph, "but there's no debt in it. It is all fair and square—cash down, so to speak, though, of course, it's not cash, but work. But, as I said before, that isn't settled."

"I am afraid, Asaph," said his sister, "that if you have to do the work first you will never get the clothes, and so you might as well come back to my offer."

Asaph came back to it and thought about it very earnestly. If by any chance he could get two suits of clothes, he would then feel that he had a head worth having. "What would you say," he said presently, "if when I wanted to smoke I was to put on a long duster—I guess Mr. Himes had dusters—and a nightcap and rubbers? I'd agree to hang the duster and the cap in the shed here, and never smoke without puttin' them on." There was a deep purpose in

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this proposition, for, enveloped in the long duster, he might sit with Thomas Rooper under the chestnut-tree and smoke and talk and plan as long as he pleased, and his companion would not know that he did not need a new suit of clothes.

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Himes. "You must make up your mind to act perfectly fairly, Asaph, or else say you will not accept my offer. But if you don't accept it, I can't see how you can keep on living with me."

"What do you mean by clothes, Marietta?" he asked.

"Well, I mean a complete suit, of course," said she. "Winter or summer?"

"I hadn't thought of that," Mrs. Himes replied. "But that can be as you choose."

"Overcoat?" asked Asaph.

"Yes," said she, "and cane and umbrella, if you like, and pocket-handkerchiefs too. I will fit you out completely, and shall be glad to have you looking like a decent man."

At the mention of the umbrella another line of perplexity showed itself upon Asaph's brow. The idea came to him that if she would add a dictionary he would strike a bargain. Thomas Rooper was certainly a very undecided and uncertain sort of man. But then there came up the thought of his pipe, and he was all at sea again. Giving up smoking was almost the same as giving up eating.

"Marietta," said he, "I will think about this."

"Very well," she answered, "but it's my opinion, Asaph, that you ought not to take more than one minute to think about it. However, I will give you

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until to-morrow morning, and then if you decide that you don't care to look like a respectable citizen, I must have some further talk with you about our future arrangements."

"Make it to-morrow night," said Asaph. And his sister consented.

The next day Asaph was unusually brisk and active, and very soon after breakfast he walked over to the village tavern to see Mr. Rooper.

"Hello!" exclaimed that individual, surprised at his visitor's early appearance at the business centre of the village. "What's started you out? Have you come after them clothes?"

A happy thought struck Asaph. He had made this visit with the intention of feeling his way toward some decision on the important subject of his sister's proposition, and here a way seemed to be opened to him. "Thomas," said he, taking his friend aside, "I am in an awful fix. Marietta can't stand my clothes any longer. If she can't stand them she can't stand me, and when it comes to that, you can see for yourself that I can't help you."

A shade settled upon Mr. Rooper's face. During the past evening he had been thinking and puffing and puffing and thinking until everybody else in the tavern had gone to bed, and he had finally made up his mind that, if he could do it, he would marry Marietta Himes. He had never been very intimate with her or her husband, but he had been to meals in the house, and he remembered the fragrant coffee and the light, puffy, well-baked rolls made by Marietta's own hands. And he thought of the many differences between living in that very good house with that gentle,

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pleasant-voiced lady and his present life in the village tavern.

So, having determined that without delay he would, with the advice and assistance of Asaph, begin his courtship, it was natural that he should feel a shock of discouragement when he heard Asaph's announcement that his sister could not endure him in the house any longer. To attack that house and its owner without the friendly offices upon which he depended was an undertaking for which he was not at all prepared.

"I don't wonder at her," he said sharply, "not a bit. But this puts a mighty different face on the thing we talked about yesterday."

"It needn't," said Asaph, quietly. "The clothes you was goin' to give me wouldn't cost a cent more to-day than they would in a couple of months, say, and when I've got 'em on Marietta will be glad to have me around. Everything can go on just as we bargained for."

Thomas shook his head. "That would be a mighty resky piece of business," he said. "You would be all right, but that's not sayin' that I would, for it strikes me that your sister is about as much a bird in the bush as any flyin' critter."

Asaph smiled. "If the bush was in the middle of a field," said he, "and there was only one boy after the bird, it would be a pretty tough job. But if the bush is in the corner of two high walls, and there's two boys, and one of 'em's got a fish-net what he can throw clean over the bush, why, then the chances is a good deal better. But droppin' figgers, Thomas, and speakin' plain and straightforward, as I always do—"

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"About things you want to git," interrupted Thomas.

"About everything," resumed Asaph. "I'll just tell you this: if I don't git decent clothes now, to-day or perhaps to-morrow, I have got to travel out of Marietta's house. I can do it and she knows it. I can go back to Drummondville and git my board for keepin' books in the store, and nobody there cares what sort of clothes I wear. But when that happens, your chance of gittin' Marietta goes up higher than a kite."

To the mind of Mr. Rooper this was most conclusive reasoning. But he would not admit it and he did not like it. "Why don't your sister give you clothes?" he said. "Old Himes must have left some."

A thin chill like a needleful of frozen thread ran down Asaph's back. "Mr. Himes's clothes!" he exclaimed. "What in the world are you talkin' about, Thomas Rooper? Tain't likely he had many 'cept what he was buried in, and what's left, if there is any, Marietta would no more think of givin' away than she would of hangin' up his funeral wreath for the canary-bird to perch on. There's a room up in the garret where she keeps his special things, for she's awful particular, and if there is any of his clothes up there I expect she's got 'em framed."

"If she thinks as much of him as that," muttered Mr. Rooper.

"Now don't git any sech ideas as them into your head, Thomas," said Asaph, quickly. "Marietta ain't a woman to rake up the past, and you never need be afraid of her rakin' up Mr. Himes. All of the premises will be hern and yourn except that room in the

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garret, and it ain't likely she'll ever ask you to go in there."

"The Lord knows I don't want to!" ejaculated Mr. Rooper.

The two men walked slowly to the end of a line of well used, or rather badly used, wooden arm-chairs which stood upon the tavern piazza, and seated themselves. Mr. Rooper's mind was in a highly perturbed condition. If he accepted Asaph's present proposition he would have to make a considerable outlay with a very shadowy prospect of return.

"If you haven't got the ready money for the clothes," said Asaph, after having given his companion some minutes for silent consideration, "there ain't a man in this village that they would trust sooner at the store for clothes,"—and then after a pause he added, "or books, which, of course, they can order from town."

At this Mr. Rooper simply shrugged his shoulders. The question of ready money or credit did not trouble him.

At this moment a man in a low phaëton, drawn by a stout gray horse, passed the tavern.

"Who's that?" asked Asaph, who knew everybody in the village.

"That's Dr. Wicker," said Thomas. "He lives over at Timberley. He 'tended John Himes in his last sickness."

"He don't practise here, does he?" said Asaph. "I never see him."

"No, but he was called in to consult." And then the speaker dropped again into cogitation.

After a few minutes Asaph rose. He knew that

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Thomas Rooper had a slow-working mind and thought it would be well to leave him to himself for a while. "I'll go home," said he, "and 'tend to my chores, and by the time you feel like comin' up and takin' a smoke with me under the chestnut-tree, I reckon you will have made up your mind, and we'll settle this thing. For if I've got to go back to Drummondville, I s'pose I'll have to pack up this afternoon."

"If you'd say pack off instead of pack up," remarked the other, "you'd come nearer the facts, considerin' the amount of your personal property. But I'll be up there in an hour or two."

When Asaph came within sight of his sister's house, he was amazed to see a phaëton and a gray horse standing in front of the gate. From this it was easy to infer that the doctor was in the house. What on earth could have happened? Was anything the matter with Marietta? And if so, why did she send for a physician who lived at a distance, instead of Dr. McIlvaine, the village doctor? In a very anxious state of mind Asaph reached the gate, and irresolutely went into the yard. His impulse was to go to the house and see what had happened, but he hesitated. He felt that Marietta might object to having a comparative stranger know that such an exceedingly shabby fellow was her brother. And, besides, his sister could not have been overtaken by any sudden illness. She had always appeared perfectly well, and there would have been no time during his brief absence from the house to send over to Timberley for a doctor.

So he sat down under the chestnut-tree to consider this strange condition of affairs. "Whatever it is,"

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he said to himself, "it's nothin' suddint, and it's bound to be chronic, and that'll skeer Thomas. I wish I hadn't asked him to come up here. The best thing for me to do will be to pretend that I've been sent to git somethin' at the store, and go straight back and keep him from comin' up."

But Asaph was a good deal quicker to think than to move, and he still sat with brows wrinkled and mind beset by doubts. For a moment he thought that it might be well to accept Marietta's proposition and let Thomas go. But then he remembered the conditions, and he shut his mental eyes at the prospect.

At that moment the gate opened and in walked Thomas Rooper. He had made up his mind and had come to say so. But the sight of the phaëton and gray horse caused him to postpone his intended announcement. "What's Dr. Wicker doin' here?" he asked abruptly.

"Dunno," said Asaph, as carelessly as he could speak. "I don't meddle with household matters of that kind. I expect it's somethin' the matter with that gal Betsey, that Marietta hires to help her. She's always wrong some way or other so that she can't do her own proper work, which I know, havin' to do a good deal of it myself. I expect it's rickets, like as not. Gals do have that sort of thing, don't they?"

"Never had anything to do with sick gals," said Thomas, "or sick people of any sort, and don't want to. But it must be somethin' pretty deep-seated for your sister to send all the way to Timberley for a doctor."

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Asaph knew very well that Mrs. Himes was too economical a person to think of doing such a thing as that, and he knew also that Betsey was as good a specimen of rustic health as could be found in the county. Therefore his companion's statement that he wanted to have nothing to do with sick people had for him a saddening import.

"I settled that business of yourn," said Mr. Rooper, "pretty soon after you left me. I thought I might as well come straight around and tell you about it. I'll make you a fair and square offer. I'll give you them clothes, though it strikes me that winter goods will be pretty heavy for this time of year. But it will be on this condition: if I don't get Marietta, you have got to give 'em back."

Asaph smiled.

"I know what you are grinnin' at," said Thomas. "But you needn't think that you are goin' to have the wearin' of them clothes for two or three months and then give 'em back. I don't go in for any long courtships. What I do in that line will be short and sharp."

"How short?" asked Asaph.

"Well, this is Thursday," replied the other, "and I calculate to ask her on Monday."

Asaph looked at his companion in amazement. "By George!" he exclaimed, "that won't work. Why, it took Marietta more'n five days to make up her mind whether she would have the chicken-house painted green or red, and you can't expect her to be quicker than that in takin' a new husband. She'd say no just as certain as she would now if you was to go in and ask her right before the doctor and Betsey. And I'll just tell you plain that it wouldn't pay me to

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do all the hustlin' around and talkin' and argyin' and recommendin' that I'd have to do just for the pleasure of wearin' a suit of warm clothes for four July days. I tell you what it is, it won't do to spring that sort of thing on a woman, especially when she's what you might call a trained widder. You got to give 'em time to think over the matter and to look up your references. There's no use talkin' about it. You must give 'em time, especially when the offer comes from a person that nobody but me has ever thought of as a marryin' man."

"Humph!" said Thomas. "That's all you know about it."

"Facts is facts, and you can't git around 'em. There isn't a woman in this village what wouldn't take at least two weeks to git it into her head that you was really courtin' her. She would be just as likely to think that you was tryin' to git a tenant in place of the McJimseys. But a month of your courtin' and a month of my workin' would just about make the matter all right with Marietta, and then you could sail in and settle it."

"Very good," said Mr. Rooper, rising suddenly. "I will court your sister for one month, and if, on the seventeenth day of August, she takes me, you can go up to the store and git them clothes. But you can't do it one minute afore. Good mornin'."

Asaph, left alone, heaved a sigh. He did not despair. But truly, fate was heaping a great many obstacles in his path. He thought it was a very hard thing for a man to get his rights in this world.

MRS. HINES sat on one end of a black hair-covered sofa in the parlor, and Dr. Wicker sat on a black

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hair-covered chair opposite to her and not far away. The blinds of the window opening upon the garden were drawn up, but those on the front window, which commanded a view of the chestnut-tree, were down. Dr. Wicker had just made a proposal of marriage to Mrs. Himes, and at that moment they were both sitting in silence.

The doctor, a bluff, hearty-looking man of about forty-five, had been very favorably impressed by Mrs. Himes when he first made her acquaintance, during her husband's sickness, and since that time he had seen her occasionally and had thought about her a great deal. Latterly letters had passed between them, and now he had come to make his declaration in person.

It was true, as her brother had said, that Marietta was not quick in making up her mind. But in this case she was able to act more promptly than usual, because she had in a great measure settled this matter before the arrival of the doctor. She knew he was going to propose, and she was very much inclined to accept him. This it was which had made her smile when she was setting the table the afternoon before, and this it was which had prompted her to make her proposition to her brother in regard to his better personal appearance.

But now she was in a condition of nervous trepidation, and made no answer. The doctor thought this was natural enough under the circumstances, but he had no idea of the cause of it. The cause of it was sitting under the chestnut-tree, the bright sunlight, streaming through a break in the branches above, illuminating and emphasizing and exaggerating his ex-

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treme shabbiness. The doctor had never seen Asaph, and it would have been a great shock to Marietta's self-respect to have him see her brother in his present aspect.

Through a crack in the blind of the front window she had seen Asaph come in and sit down, and she had seen Mr. Rooper arrive and had noticed his departure. And now, with an anxiety which made her chin tremble, she sat and hoped that Asaph would get up and go away. For she knew that if she should say to the doctor what she was perfectly willing to say then and there, he would very soon depart, being a man of practical mind and pressing business, and that, going to the front door with him, she would be obliged to introduce him to a prospective brother-in-law whose appearance, she truly believed, would make him sick. For the doctor was a man, she well knew, who was quite as nice and particular about dress and personal appearance as the late Mr. Himes had been.

Dr. Wicker, aware that the lady's perturbation was increasing instead of diminishing, thought it wise not to press the matter at this moment. He felt that he had been, perhaps, a little over-prompt in making his proposition. "Madam," said he, rising, "I will not ask you to give me an answer now. I will go away and let you think about it, and will come again to-morrow."

Through the crack in the window-blind Marietta saw that Asaph was still under the tree. What could she do to delay the doctor? She did not offer to take leave of him, but stood looking upon the floor. It seemed a shame to make so good a man go all the way

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back to Timberley and come again next day, just because that ragged, dirty Asaph was sitting under the chestnut-tree.

The doctor moved toward the door, and as she followed him she glanced once more through the crack in the window-blind, and, to her intense delight, she saw Asaph jump up from the bench and run around to the side of the house. He had heard the doctor's footsteps in the hallway, and had not wished to meet him. The unsatisfactory condition of his outward appearance had been so strongly impressed upon him of late that he had become a little sensitive in regard to it when strangers were concerned. But if he had only known that his exceedingly unattractive garments had prevented his sister from making a compact which would have totally ruined his plans in regard to her matrimonial disposition and his own advantage, he would have felt for those old clothes the respect and gratitude with which a Roman soldier regarded the shield and sword which had won him a battle.

Down the middle of the garden, at the back of the house, there ran a path, and along this path Asaph walked meditatively, with his hands in his trousers pockets. It was a discouraging place for him to walk, for the beds on each side of him were full of weeds, which he had intended to pull up as soon as he should find time for the work, but which had now grown so tall and strong that they could not be uprooted without injuring the plants which were the legitimate occupants of the garden.

Asaph did not know it, but at this moment there was not one person in the whole world who thought

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kindly of him. His sister was so mortified by him that she was in tears in the house; his crony, Thomas, had gone away almost angry with him; and even Betsey, whom he had falsely accused of rickets, and who had often shown a pity for him simply because he looked so forlorn, had steeled her heart against him that morning when she found he had gone away without providing her with any fuel for the kitchen fire.

But he had not made a dozen turns up and down the path before he became aware of the feeling of Marietta. She looked out of the back door and then walked rapidly toward him. "Asaph," said she, "I hope you are considering what I said to you yesterday, for I mean to stick to my word. If you don't choose to accept my offer, I want you to go back to Drummondville early to-morrow morning. And I don't feel in the least as if I were turning you out of the house, for I have given you a chance to stay here, and have only asked you to act like a decent Christian. I will not have you here disgracing my home. When Dr. Wicker came to-day, and I looked out and saw you with that miserable little coat with the sleeves half-way up to the elbows, and great holes in it which you will not let anybody patch because you are too proud to wear patches, and those wretched faded trousers, out at the knees, and which have been turned up and hemmed at the bottom so often that they are six inches above your shoes, and your whole scarecrow appearance, I was so ashamed of you that I could not keep the tears out of my eyes. To tell a respectable gentleman like Dr. Wicker that you were my brother was more than I could bear, and I was

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glad when I saw you get up and sneak out of the way. I hate to talk to you in this way, Asaph, but you have brought it on yourself."

Her brother looked at her a moment. "Do you want me to go away before breakfast?" he said.

"No," answered Marietta, "but immediately afterwards." And in her mind she resolved that breakfast should be very early the next morning.

If Asaph had any idea of yielding, he did not intend to show it until the last moment, and so he changed the subject. "What's the matter with Betsey?" said he. "If she's out of health you'd better get rid of her."

"There's nothing the matter with Betsey," answered his sister. "Dr. Wicker came to see me."

"Came to see you!" exclaimed her brother. "What in the world did he do that for? You never told me that you were ailin'. Is it that sprain in your ankle?"

"Nonsense," said Marietta. "I had almost recovered from that sprain when you came here. There's nothing the matter with my ankle; the trouble is probably with my heart."

The moment she said this she regretted it, for Asaph had so good a head, and could catch meanings so quickly.

"I'm sorry to hear that, Marietta," said Asaph. "That's a good deal more serious."

"Yes," said she, and she turned and went back to the house.

Asaph continued to walk up and down the path. He had not done a stroke of work that morning, but he did not think of that. His sister's communication

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saddened him. He liked Marietta, and it grieved him to hear that she had anything the matter with her heart. He knew this was often the case with people who looked perfectly well, and there was no reason why he should have suspected any disorder in her. Of course, in this case, there was good reason for her sending for the very best doctor to be had. It was all plain enough to him now.

But as he walked and walked and walked, and looked at the garden, and looked at the little orchard, and looked at the house and the top of the big chestnut-tree, which showed itself above the roof, a thought came into his mind which had never been there before—he was Marietta's heir. It was a dreadful thing to think of his sister's possible early departure from this world. But, after all, life is life, reality is reality, and business is business. He was Marietta's only legal heir.

Of course he had known this before, but it had never seemed to be of any importance. He was a good deal older than she was, and he had always looked upon her as a marrying woman. When he made his proposition to Mr. Rooper the thought of his own heirship never came into his mind. In fact, if any one had offered him ten dollars for said heirship, he would have asked fifteen, and would have afterwards agreed to split the difference and take twelve and a half.

But now everything had changed. If Marietta had anything the matter with her heart, there was no knowing when all that he saw might be his own. No sooner had he walked and thought long enough for his mind to fully appreciate the altered aspects of his

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future, than he determined instantly to thrust out Mr. Rooper from all connection with that future. He would go and tell him so at once.

To the dismay of Betsey, who had been watching him, expecting that he would soon stop walking about and go and saw some wood with which to cook the dinner, he went out of the front gate and strode rapidly into the village. He had some trouble in finding Mr. Rooper, who had gone off to take a walk and arrange a conversation with which to begin his courtship of Mrs. Himes, but he overtook him under a tree by the side of the creek.

"Thomas," said he, "I have changed my mind. You have been very hard on me, and I'm not goin' to stand it. I can get the clothes and things I need without makin' myself your slave and workin' myself to death, and, perhaps, settin' my sister ag'in' me for life by tryin' to make her believe that black's white, that you are the kind of husband she ought to have, and that you hate pipes and never touch spirits. It would be a mean thing for me to do, and I won't do it. I did think you was a generous-minded man with the right sort of feelin' for them as wanted to be your friends, but I've found out that I was mis-took, and I'm not goin' to sacrifice my sister to any such person. Now that's my state of mind plain and square."

Thomas Rooper shrunk two inches in height. "Asaph Scantle," he said, in a voice which seemed also to have shrunk, "I don't understand you. I wasn't hard on you. I only wanted to make a fair bargain. If I'd got her, I'd paid up cash on delivery. You couldn't expect a man to do more than that.

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But I tell you, Asaph, that I am mighty serious about this. The more I have thought about your sister the more I want her. And when I tell you that I've been a-thinkin' about her pretty much all night, you may know that I want her a good deal. I was intendin' to go to-morrow and begin to court her."

"Well, you needn't," said Asaph. "It won't do no good. If you don't have me to back you up you might as well try to twist that tree as to move her. You can't do it."

"But you don't mean to go ag'in' me, do you, Asaph?" asked Thomas, ruefully.

"Tain't necessary," replied the other. "You will go ag'in' yourself."

For a few moments Mr. Rooper remained silent. He was greatly discouraged and dismayed by what had been said to him, but he could not yet give up what had become the great object of his life. "Asaph," said he, presently, "it cuts me to the in'ards to think that you have gone back on me. But I tell you what I'll do: if you will promise not to say anything ag'in' me to Mrs. Himes, and not to set yourself in any way between me and her, I'll go along with you to the store now, and you can git that suit of clothes and the umbrella, and I'll tell 'em to order the dictionary and hand it over to you as soon as it comes. I'd like you to help me, but if you will only promise to stand out of the way, and not hinder, I'll do the fair thing by you and pay in advance."

"Humph!" said Asaph. "I do believe you think you are the only man that wants Marietta."

A pang passed through the heart of Mr. Rooper. He had been thinking a great deal of Mrs. Himes and

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everything connected with her, and he had even thought of that visit of Dr. Wicker. The doctor was a widower, and a well-to-do and well-appearing man, and it would have been a long way for him to come just for some trifling rickets in a servant-girl. Being really in love, his imagination was in a very capering mood, and he began to fear that the doctor had come to court Mrs. Himes.

“Asaph,” he said quickly, “that’s a good offer I make you. If you take it, in less than an hour you can walk home looking like a gentleman.”

Asaph had taken his reed pipe from his coat-pocket and was filling it. As he pushed the coarse tobacco into the bowl, he considered. “Thomas,” said he, “that ain’t enough. Things have changed, and it wouldn’t pay me. But I won’t be hard on you. I’m a good friend of yours, and I’ll tell you what I’ll do: if you will give me now all the things we spoke of between us,—and I forgot to mention a cane and pocket-handkerchiefs,—and give me, besides, that meerschaum pipe of yours, I’ll promise not to hinder you, but let you go ahead and git Marietta if you kin. I must say it’s a good deal for me to do, knowin’ how much you’ll git and how little you’ll give, and knowin’, too, the other chances she’s got if she wanted ‘em. But I’ll do it for the sake of friendship.”

“My meerschaum pipe!” groaned Mr. Rooper. “My Centennial Exhibition pipe!” His tones were so plaintive that for a moment Asaph felt a little touch of remorse. But then he reflected that if Thomas really did get Marietta the pipe would be of no use to him, for she would not allow him to smoke it. And, besides, realities were realities, and business

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was business. "That pipe may be very dear to you, Thomas," he said, "but I want you to remember that Marietta's very dear to me."

This touched Mr. Rooper, whose heart was sensitive as it had never been before. "Come along, Asaph," he said. "You shall have everything, meerschaum pipe included. If anybody but me is goin' to smoke that pipe, I'd like it to be my brother-in-law." Thus, with amber-tipped guile, Mr. Rooper hoped to win over his friend to not only not hinder, but to help him.

As the two men walked away, Asaph thought that he was not acting an unfraternal part toward Marietta, for it would not be necessary for him to say or to do anything to induce her to refuse so unsuitable a suitor as Thomas Rooper.

About fifteen minutes before dinner—which had been cooked with bits of wood which Betsey had picked up here and there—Asaph walked into the front yard of his sister's house attired in a complete suit of new clothes, thick and substantial in texture, pepper-and-salt in color, and as long in the legs and arms as the most fastidious could desire. He had on a new shirt and a clean collar, with a handsome black silk cravat tied in a great bow, and a new felt hat was on his head. On his left arm he carried an overcoat, carefully folded, with the lining outside, and in his right hand an umbrella and a cane. In his pockets were half a dozen new handkerchiefs and the case containing Mr. Rooper's Centennial meerschaum.

Marietta, who was in the hallway when he opened the front door, scarcely knew him as he approached.

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“Asaph!” she exclaimed. “What has happened to you? Why, you actually look like a gentleman!”

Asaph grinned. “Do you want me to go to Drummondville right after breakfast to-morrow?” he asked.

“My dear brother,” said Marietta, “don’t crush me by talking about that. But if you could have seen yourself as I saw you, and could have felt as I felt, you would not wonder at me. You must forget all that. I should be proud now to introduce you as my brother to any dootor or king or President. But tell me how you got those beautiful clothes.”

Asaph was sometimes beset by an absurd regard for truth which much annoyed him. He could not say that he had worked for the clothes, and he did not wish his sister to think that he had run in debt for them. “They’re paid for, every thread of ‘em,” he said. “I got ‘em in trade. These things is mine, and I don’t owe no man a cent for ‘em. Now it seems to me that dinner must be ready.”

“And proud I am,” said Marietta, who never before had shown such enthusiastic affection for her brother, “to sit down to the table with such a nice-looking fellow as you are.”

The next morning Mr. Rooper came into Mrs. Himes’s yard, and there beheld Asaph, in all the glory of his new clothes, sitting under the chestnut-tree, smoking the Centennial meerschaum pipe. Mr. Rooper himself was dressed in his very best clothes, but he carried with him no pipe.

“Sit down,” said Asaph, “and have a smoke.”

“No,” replied the other. “I am goin’ in the house. I’ve come to see your sister.”

“Goin’ to begin already?” said Asaph.

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“Yes,” said the other. “I told you I was goin’ to begin to-day.”

“Very good,” said his friend, crossing his pepper-and-salt legs. “And you will finish the seventeenth of August. That’s a good, reasonable time.”

But Mr. Rooper had no intention of courting Mrs. Himes for a month. He intended to propose to her that very morning. He had been turning over the matter in his mind, and for several reasons had come to this conclusion. In the first place, he did not believe that he could trust Asaph, even for a single day, not to oppose him. Furthermore, his mind was in such a turmoil from the combined effect of the constantly present thought that Asaph was wearing his clothes, his hat, and his shoes, and smoking his beloved pipe, and of the perplexities and agitations consequent upon his sentiments toward Mrs. Himes, that he did not believe he could bear the mental strain during another night.

Five minutes later Marietta Himes was sitting on the horsehair sofa in the parlor, with Mr. Rooper on the horsehair chair opposite to her and not very far away, and he was delivering the address which he had prepared.

“Madam,” said he, “I am a man that takes things in this world as they comes, and is content to wait until the time comes for them to come. I was well acquainted with John Himes. I knowed him in life, and I helped lay him out. As long as there was reason to suppose that the late Mr. Himes—I mean that the grass over the grave of Mr. Himes had remained unwithered—I am not the man to take one step in the direction of his shoes, nor even to consider the size of

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'em in connection with the measure of my own feet. But time will pass on in nater as well as in real life, and while I know very well, Mrs. Himes, that certain feelin's toward them that was, is like the leaves of the oak-tree and can't be blowed off even by the fiercest tempests of affliction, still them leaves will wither in the fall and turn brown and curl up at the edges, though they don't depart, but stick on tight as wax all winter until in the springtime they're pushed off gently without knowin' it by the green leaves which come out in real life as well as nater."

When he had finished this opening Mr. Rooper breathed a little sigh of relief. He had not forgotten any of it, and it pleased him.

Marietta sat and looked at him. She had a good sense of humor, and while she was naturally surprised at what had been said to her, she was greatly amused by it, and really wished to hear what else Thomas Rooper had to say to her.

"Now, madam," he continued, "I am not the man to thrash a tree with a pole to knock the leaves off before their time. But when the young leaves is pushin' and the old leaves is droppin' (not to make any allusion, of course, to any shrivellin' of proper respect), then I come forward, madam, not to take the place of anybody else, but jest as the nateral consequence of the seasons, which everybody ought to expect, even such as you, madam, which I may liken to a hemlock-spruce which keeps straight on in the same general line of appearance without no reference to the fall of the year, nor winter nor summer. And so, Mrs. Himes, I come here to-day to offer to lead you ag'in to the altar. I've never been there my-

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self, and there ain't no woman in the world that I'd go with but you. I'm a straightforward person, and when I've got a thing to say, I say it, and now I have said it. And so I set here a-waitin' your answer."

At this moment the shutters of the front window, which had been closed, were opened, and Asaph put in his head. "Look here, Thomas Rooper," he said, "these shoes is pegged. I didn't bargain for no pegged shoes. I wanted 'em sewed. Everything was to be first-class."

Mr. Rooper, who had been leaning forward in his chair, his hands upon his knees, and his face glistening with his expressed feelings as brightly as the old-fashioned but shining silk hat which stood on the floor by his side, turned his head, grew red to the ears, and then sprang to his feet. "Asaph Scantle," he cried, with extended fist, "you've broke your word. You hindered."

"No, I didn't," said Asaph, sulkily. "But pegged shoes is too much for any man to stand." And he withdrew from the window, closing the shutters again.

"What does this mean?" asked Mrs. Himes, who had also risen.

"It means," said Thomas, speaking with difficulty, his indignation was so great, "that your brother is a person of tricks, and meanders beyond the reach of common human calculation. I don't like to say this of a man who is more or less likely to be my brother-in-law, but I can't help sayin' it, so entirely upset am I at his goin' back on me at such a minute."

"Going back on you?" asked Mrs. Himes. "What do you mean? What has he promised?"

Thomas hesitated. He did not wish to interrupt

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his courtship by the discussion of any new question, especially this question. "If we could settle what we have been talkin' about, Mrs. Himes," he said, "and if you would give me my answer, then I could git my mind down to commoner things. But swingin' on a hook as I am, I don't know whether my head or my heels is uppermost, or what's revolvin' around me."

"Oh, I can give you your answer quickly enough," she said. "It is impossible for me to marry you, so that's all settled."

"Impossible is a big word," said Mr. Rooper. "Has anybody else got afore me?"

"I am not bound to answer that question," said Marietta, slightly coloring. "But I cannot accept you, Mr. Rooper."

"Then there's somebody else, of course," said Thomas, gazing darkly upon the floor. "And what's more, Asaph knew it. That's just as clear as daylight. That's what made him come to me yesterday and go back on his first bargain."

"Now, then," said Mrs. Himes, speaking very decidedly, "I want to know what you mean by this talk about bargains."

Mr. Rooper knit his brows. "This is mighty different talk," he said, "from the kind I expected when I came here. But you have answered my question--now I'll answer yours. Asaph Scantle, no longer ago than day before yesterday, after hearin' that things wasn't goin' very well with me, recommended me to marry you, and agreed that he would do his level best, by day and by night, to help me git you, if I would give him a suit of clothes, an umbrella, and a dictionary."

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At this Mrs. Himes gave a little gasp and sat down.

“Now, I hadn’t no thoughts of tradin’ for a wife,” continued Thomas, “especially in woollen goods and books, but when I considered and turned the matter over in my mind, and thought what a woman you was, and what a life there was afore me if I got you, I agreed to do it. Then he wanted pay beforehand, and that I wouldn’t agree to, not because I thought you wasn’t wuth it, but because I couldn’t trust him if anybody offered him more before I got you. But that ain’t the wust of it. Yesterday he came down to see me and went back on his bargain, and that after I had spent the whole night thinkin’ of you and what I was goin’ to say. And he put on such high-cockalorum airs that I, bein’ as soft as mush around the heart, jest wilted and agreed to give him everything he bargained for if he would promise not to hinder. But he wasn’t satisfied with that, and wouldn’t come to no terms until I’d give him my Centennial pipe, what’s been like a child to me this many a year. And when he saw how disgruntled I was at sech a loss, he said that my pipe might be very dear to me, but his sister was jest as dear to him. Then, on top of the whole thing, he pokes his head through the shutters and hinders jest at the most ticklish moment.”

“A dictionary and a pipe!” ejaculated poor Marietta, her eyes fixed upon the floor.

“But I’m goin’ to make him give ‘em all back,” exclaimed Thomas. “They was the price of not hinderin’, and he hindered.”

“He shall give them back,” said Marietta, rising, “but you must understand, Mr. Rooper, that in no

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way did Asaph interfere with your marrying me. That was a matter with which he did have and could have nothing to do. And now I wish you could get away without speaking to him. I do not want any quarrelling or high words here, and I will see him and arrange the matter better than you can do it."

"Oh, I can git away without speakin' to him," said Mr. Rooper, with reddened face. And so saying, he strode out of the house, through the front yard and out of the gate, without turning his head toward Asaph, still sitting under the tree.

"Oh, ho," said the latter to himself, "she's bounced him short and sharp, and it serves him right, too, after playin' that trick on me. Pegged shoes, indeed!"

At this moment the word "Asaph" came from the house in tones shriller and sharper and higher than any in which he had ever heard it pronounced before. He sprang to his feet and went to the house. His sister took him into the parlor and shut the door. Her eyes were red and her face was pale. "Asaph," said she, "Mr. Rooper has told me the whole of your infamous conduct. Now I know what you meant when you said that you were making arrangements to get clothes. You were going to sell me for them. And when you found out that I was likely to marry Dr. Wicker, you put up your price and wanted a dictionary and a pipe."

"No, Marietta," said Asaph, "the dictionary belonged to the first bargain. If you knew how I need a dictionary—"

"Be still!" she cried. "I do not want you to say a word. You have acted most shamefully toward me,

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and I want you to go away this very day. And before you go you must give back to Mr. Rooper everything that you got from him. I will fit you out with some of Mr. Himes's clothes and make no conditions at all, only that you shall go away. Come up-stairs with me, and I will get the clothes."

The room in the garret was opened and various garments which had belonged to the late Mr. Himes were brought out.

"This is pretty hard on me, Marietta," said Asaph, as he held up a coat, "to give up new all-wool goods for things what has been worn and is part cotton, if I am a judge."

Marietta said very little. She gave him what clothes he needed, and insisted on his putting them on, making a package of the things he had received from Mr. Rooper and returning them to that gentleman. Asaph at first grumbled, but he finally obeyed with a willingness which might have excited the suspicions of Marietta had she not been so angry.

With an enormous package wrapped in brown paper in one hand, and a cane, an umbrella, and a very small hand-bag in the other, Asaph approached the tavern. Mr. Rooper was sitting on the piazza alone. He was smoking a very common-looking clay pipe and gazing intently into the air in front of him. When his old crony came and stood before the piazza he did not turn his head nor his eyes.

"Thomas Rooper," said Asaph, "you have got me into a very bad scrape. I've been turned out of doors on account of what you said about me. And where I'm goin' I don't know, for I can't walk to Drummondville. What's more, I kept my word and

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you didn't. I didn't hinder you. For how could I suppose that you was goin' to pop the question the very minute you got inside the door? And that dictionary you promised I've not got."

Thomas Rooper answered not a word, but looked steadily in front of him.

"There's another thing," said Asaph. "What are you goin' to allow me for that suit of clothes what I've been wearin', what I took off in your room and left there?"

At this Mr. Rooper sprang to his feet with such violence that the fire danced out of the bowl of his pipe. "What is the fare to Drummondville?" he cried.

Asaph reflected a moment. "Three dollars and fifty cents, includin' supper."

"I'll give you that for them clothes," said the other, and counted out the money.

Asaph took it and sighed. "You've been hard on me, Thomas," said he, "but I bear you no grudge. Good-by."

As he walked slowly toward the station Mr. Scantle stopped at the store. "Has that dictionary come that was ordered for me?" he said. When told that it could not be expected for several days, he did not despair, for it was possible that Thomas Rooper might be so angry that he would forget to countermand the order. In that case he might yet hope to obtain the coveted book.

The package containing the Rooper winter suit was heavy, and Asaph walked slowly. He did not want to go to Drummondville, for he hated bookkeeping, and his year of leisure and good living had spoiled

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him for work and poor fare. In this moody state he was very glad to stop and have a little chat with Mrs. McJimsey, who was sitting at her front window.

This good lady was the principal dressmaker of the village, and by hard work and attention to business she made a very comfortable living. She was a widow, small of stature, thin of feature, very neatly dressed, and pleasant to look at. Asaph entered the little front yard, put his package on the door-step, and stood under the window to talk to her. Dressed in the clothes of the late Mr. Himes, her visitor presented such a respectable appearance that Mrs. McJimsey was not in the least ashamed to have people see him standing there, which she would have been a few days ago. Indeed, she felt complimented that he should want to stop. The conversation soon turned upon her removal from her present abode.

"I'm awfully sorry to have to go," she said, "for my time is up just in the middle of my busy season, and that's goin' to throw me back dreadfully. He hasn't done right by me, that Mr. Rooper, in lettin' things go to rack and ruin in this way, and me payin' his rent so regular."

"That's true," said Asaph. "Thomas Rooper is a hard man—a hard man, Mrs. McJimsey. I can see how he would be overbearin' with a lone woman like you, neither your son nor your daughter bein' of age yet to take your part."

"Yes, Mr. Scantle, it's very hard."

Asaph stood for a moment looking at a little bed of zinnias by the side of the door-step. "What you want, Mrs. McJimsey," said he, "is a man in the house."

In an instant Mrs. McJimsey flushed pink. It

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was such a strange thing for a gentleman to say to her.

Asaph saw the flush. He had not expected that result from his remark, but he was quick to take advantage of it. "Mrs. McJimsey," said he, "you are a widow, and you are imposed upon, and you need somebody to take care of you. If you will put that job into my hands I will do it. I am a man what works with his head, and if you will let me I'll work for you. To put it square, I ask you to marry me. My sister's goin' to be married, and I'm on the p'int of goin' away, for I could not abear to stay in her house when strangers come into it. But if you say the word, I'll stay here and be yours for ever and ever more."

Mrs. McJimsey said not a word, but her head drooped and wild thoughts ran through her brain. Thoughts not wild, but well trained and broken, ran through Asaph's brain. The idea of going to Drummondville and spending for the journey thither a dollar and seventy-five cents of the money he had received from Mr. Rooper now became absolutely repulsive to him.

"Mrs. McJimsey," said he, "I will say more. Not only do I ask you to marry me, but I ask you to do it now. The evenin' sun is settin', the evenin' birds is singin', and it seems to me, Mrs. McJimsey, that all nater p'ints to this softenin' hour as a marryin' moment. You say your son won't be home from his work until supper-time, and your daughter has gone out for a walk. Come with me to Mr. Parker's, the Methodist minister, and let us join hands at the altar there. The gardener and his wife is always ready to stand up as witnesses. And when your son and your

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daughter comes home to supper, they can find their mother here afore 'em, married and settled."

"But, Mr. Scantle," exclaimed Mrs. McJimsey, "it's so suddint. What will the neighbors say?"

"As for bein' suddint, Mrs. McJimsey, I've knowed you for nearly a year, and now, bein' on the way to leave what's been my happy home, I couldn't keep the truth from you no longer. And as for the neighbors, they needn't know that we hain't been engaged for months."

"It's so queer, so very queer," said the little dress-maker. Her face flushed again, and there were tears, not at all sorrowful ones, in her eyes, and her somewhat needle-pricked left hand accidentally laid itself upon the window-sill in easy reach of any one outside.

THE next morning Mr. Rooper, being of a practical way of thinking, turned his thoughts from love and resentment to the subject of his income. And he soon became convinced that it would be better to keep the McJimseys in his house, if it could be done without too great an outlay for repairs. So he walked over to his property. When he reached the house he was almost stupefied to see Asaph in a chair in the front yard, dressed in the new suit of clothes which he, Thomas Rooper, had paid for, and smoking the Centennial pipe.

"Good morning, Mr. Rooper," said Asaph, in a loud and cheery voice. "I suppose you've come to talk to Mrs. McJimsey about the work you've got to do here to make this house fit to live in. But there ain't no Mrs. McJimsey. She's Mrs. Scantle now, and I'm your tenant. You can talk to me."

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DR. WICKER came to see Mrs. Himes in the afternoon of the day he had promised to come, and early in the autumn they were married. Since Asaph Scantle had married and settled he had not seen his sister nor spoken to her, but he determined that on so joyful an occasion as this he would show no resentment. So he attended the wedding in the village church, attired in the suit of clothes which had belonged to the late Mr. Himes.

THE REMARKABLE WRECK OF THE
“THOMAS HYKE”

THE REMARKABLE WRECK OF THE “THOMAS HYKE”

IT was half-past one by the clock in the office of the Registrar of Woes. The room was empty, for it was Wednesday, and the Registrar always went home early on Wednesday afternoons. He had made that arrangement when he accepted the office. He was willing to serve his fellow-citizens in any suitable position to which he might be called, but he had private interests which could not be neglected. He belonged to his country, but there was a house in the country which belonged to him, and there were a great many things appertaining to that house which needed attention, especially in pleasant summer weather. It is true he was often absent on afternoons which did not fall on the Wednesday, but the fact of his having appointed a particular time for the furtherance of his outside interests so emphasized their importance that his associates in the office had no difficulty in understanding that affairs of such moment could not always be attended to in a single afternoon of the week.

But, although the large room devoted to the especial use of the Registrar was unoccupied, there were other rooms connected with it which were not in that condition. With the suite of offices to the left we have

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nothing to do, but will confine our attention to a moderate-sized room to the right of the Registrar's office, and connected by a door, now closed, with that large and handsomely furnished chamber. This was the office of the Clerk of Shipwrecks, and it was at present occupied by five persons. One of these was the clerk himself, a man of goodly appearance, somewhere between twenty-five and forty-five years of age, and of a demeanor such as might be supposed to belong to one who had occupied a high position in state affairs, but who, by the cabals of his enemies, had been forced to resign the great operations of statesmanship which he had been directing, and who now stood, with a quite resigned air, pointing out to the populace the futile and disastrous efforts of the incompetent one who was endeavoring to fill his place. The Clerk of Shipwrecks had never fallen from such a position, never having occupied one, but he had acquired the demeanor referred to without going through the preliminary exercises.

Another occupant was a very young man, the personal clerk of the Registrar of Woes, who always closed all the doors of the office of that functionary on Wednesday afternoons, and at other times when outside interests demanded his principal's absence, after which he betook himself to the room of his friend the Shipwreck Clerk.

Then, there was a middle-aged man named Mathers, also a friend of the clerk, and who was one of the eight who had made application for a sub-position in this department, which was now filled by a man who was expected to resign when a friend of his, a gentleman of influence in an interior county, should succeed

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in procuring the nomination, as congressional representative of his district, of an influential politician, whose election was considered assured in case certain expected action on the part of the administration should bring his party into power. The person now occupying the sub-position hoped then to get something better, and Mathers, consequently, was very willing, while waiting for the place, to visit the offices of the department and acquaint himself with its duties.

A fourth person was J. George Watts, a juryman by profession, who had brought with him his brother-in-law, a stranger in the city.

The Shipwreck Clerk had taken off his good coat, which he had worn to luncheon, and had replaced it by a lighter garment of linen, much bespattered with ink. And he now produced a cigar-box containing six cigars.

“Gents,” said he, “here is the fag-end of a box of cigars. It’s not like having the pick of the box, but they are all I have left.”

Mr. Mathers, J. George Watts, and the brother-in-law each took a cigar with that careless yet deferential manner which always distinguishes the treatee from the treator, and then the box was protruded in an offhand way toward Harry Covare, the personal clerk of the Registrar. But this young man declined, saying that he preferred cigarettes, a package of which he drew from his pocket. He had very often seen that cigar-box with a Havana brand, which he himself had brought from the other room after the Registrar had emptied it, passed around with six cigars, no more nor less, and he was wise enough to

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know that the Shipwreck Clerk did not expect to supply him with smoking material. If that gentleman had offered to the friends who generally dropped in on him on Wednesday afternoon the paper bag of cigars sold at five cents each when bought singly, but half a dozen for a quarter of a dollar, they would have been quite as thankfully received. But it better pleased his deprecative soul to put them in an empty cigar-box, and thus throw around them the halo of the presumption that ninety-four of their imported companions had been smoked.

The Shipwreck Clerk, having lighted a cigar for himself, sat down in his revolving chair, turned his back to his desk, and threw himself into an easy cross-legged attitude which showed that he was perfectly at home in that office. Harry Covare mounted a high stool, while the visitors seated themselves in three wooden arm-chairs. But few words had been said, and each man had scarcely tossed his first tobacco ashes on the floor, when some one wearing heavy boots was heard opening an outside door and entering the Registrar's room. Harry Covare jumped down from his stool, laid his half-smoked cigarette thereon, and bounced into the next room, closing the door after him. In about a minute he returned, and the Shipwreck Clerk looked at him inquiringly.

"An old cock in a pea-jacket," said Mr. Covare, taking up his cigarette and mounting his stool. "I told him the Registrar would be here in the morning. He said he had something to report about a shipwreck, and I told him the Registrar would be here in the morning. Had to tell him that three times, and then he went."

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"School don't keep Wednesday afternoons," said Mr. J. George Watts, with a knowing smile.

"No, sir," said the Shipwreck Clerk, emphatically, changing the crossing of his legs. "A man can't keep grinding on, day in and out, without breaking down. Outsiders may say what they please about it, but it can't be done. We've got to let up sometimes. People who do the work need the rest just as much as those who do the looking on."

"And more too, I should say," observed Mr. Mathers.

"Our little let-up on Wednesday afternoons," modestly observed Harry Covare, "is like death—it is sure to come; while the let-ups we get other days are more like the diseases which prevail in certain areas—you can't be sure whether you're going to get them or not."

The Shipwreck Clerk smiled benignantly at this remark, and the rest laughed. Mr. Mathers had heard it before, but he would not impair the pleasantness of his relations with a future colleague by hinting that he remembered it.

"He gets such ideas from his beastly statistics," said the Shipwreck Clerk.

"Which come pretty heavy on him sometimes, I expect," observed Mr. Mathers.

"They needn't," said the Shipwreck Clerk, "if things were managed here as they ought to be. If John J. Laylor," meaning thereby the Registrar, "was the right kind of a man, you'd see things very different here from what they are now. There'd be a larger force."

"That's so," said Mr. Mathers.

"And not only that, but there'd be better buildings

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and more accommodations. Were any of you ever up to Anster? Well, take a run up there some day, and see what sort of buildings the department has there. William Q. Green is a very different man from John J. Laylor. You don't see him sitting in his chair picking his teeth the whole winter, while the representative from his district never says a word about his department from one end of a session of Congress to the other. Now if I had charge of things here, I'd make such changes that you wouldn't know the place. I'd throw two rooms off here, and a corridor and entrance door at that end of the building. I'd close up this door," pointing toward the Registrar's room, "and if John J. Laylor wanted to come in here he might go round to the end door like other people."

The thought struck Harry Covare that in that case there would be no John J. Laylor, but he would not interrupt.

"And what is more," continued the Shipwreck Clerk, "I'd close up this whole department at twelve o'clock on Saturdays. The way things are managed now, a man has no time to attend to his own private business. Suppose I think of buying a piece of land, and want to go out and look at it, or suppose any one of you gentlemen were here and thought of buying a piece of land and wanted to go out and look at it, what are you going to do about it? You don't want to go on Sunday, and when are you going to go?"

Not one of the other gentlemen had ever thought of buying a piece of land, nor had they any reason to suppose that they ever would purchase an inch of soil, unless they bought it in a flower-pot. But they all

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agreed that the way things were managed now there was no time for a man to attend to his own business.

"But you can't expect John J. Laylor to do anything," said the Shipwreck Clerk.

However, there was one thing which that gentleman always expected John J. Laylor to do. When the clerk was surrounded by a number of persons in hours of business, and when he had succeeded in impressing them with the importance of his functions, and the necessity of paying deferential attention to himself if they wished their business attended to, John J. Laylor would be sure to walk into the office and address the Shipwreck Clerk in such a manner as to let the people present know that he was a clerk and nothing else, and that he, the Registrar, was the head of that department. These humiliations the Shipwreck Clerk never forgot.

There was a little pause here, and then Mr. Mathers remarked :

"I should think you'd be awfully bored with the long stories of shipwrecks that the people come and tell you."

He hoped to change the conversation, because, although he wished to remain on good terms with the subordinate officers, it was not desirable that he should be led to say much against John J. Laylor.

"No, sir," said the Shipwreck Clerk, "I am not bored. I did not come here to be bored, and as long as I have charge of this office I don't intend to be. The long-winded old salts who come here to report their wrecks never spin out their prosy yarns to me. The first thing I do is to let them know just what I

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want of them, and not an inch beyond that does a man of them go, at least while I am managing the business. There are times when John J. Taylor comes in and puts in his oar, and wants to hear the whole story, which is pure stuff and nonsense, for John J. Taylor doesn't know anything more about a shipwreck than he does about—”

“The endemities in the Lake George area,” suggested Harry Covare.

“Yes, or any other part of his business,” said the Shipwreck Clerk. “And when he takes it into his head to interfere, all business stops till some second mate of a coal-schooner has told his whole story, from his sighting land on the morning of one day to his getting ashore on it on the afternoon of the next. Now I don't put up with any such nonsense. There's no man living that can tell me anything about shipwrecks. I've never been to sea myself, but that's not necessary. If I had gone, it's not likely I'd been wrecked. But I've read about every kind of shipwreck that ever happened. When I first came here I took care to post myself upon these matters, because I knew it would save trouble. I have read ‘Robinson Crusoe,’ ‘The Wreck of the *Grosvenor*,’ ‘The Sinking of the *Royal George*,’ and wrecks by water-spouts, tidal waves, and every other thing which would knock a ship into a cocked hat, and I've classified every sort of wreck under its proper head. And when I've found out to what class a wreck belongs, I know all about it. Now, when a man comes here to report a wreck, the first thing he has to do is just to shut down on his story, and to stand up square and answer a few questions that I put to him. In two

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minutes I know just what kind of shipwreck he's had, and then, when he gives me the name of his vessel and one or two other points, he may go. I know all about that wreck, and I make a much better report of the business than he could have done if he'd stood here talking three days and three nights. The amount of money that's been saved to our taxpayers by the way I've systematized the business of this office is not to be calculated in figures.”

The brother-in-law of J. George Watts knocked the ashes from the remnant of his cigar, looked contemplatively at the coal for a moment, and then remarked :

“I think you said there's no kind of shipwreck you don't know about?”

“That's what I said,” replied the Shipwreck Clerk.

“I think,” said the other, “I could tell you of a shipwreck, in which I was concerned, that wouldn't go into any of your classes.”

The Shipwreck Clerk threw away the end of his cigar, put both his hands into his trousers pockets, stretched out his legs, and looked steadfastly at the man who had made this unwarrantable remark. Then a pitying smile stole over his countenance, and he said : “Well, sir, I'd like to hear your account of it, and before you get a quarter through I can stop you just where you are, and go ahead and tell the rest of the story myself.”

“That's so,” said Harry Covare. “You'll see him do it just as sure pop as a spread rail bounces the engine.”

“Well, then,” said the brother-in-law of J. George Watts, “I'll tell it.” And he began :

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“It was just two years ago, the first of this month, that I sailed for South America in the *Thomas Hyke*.”

At this point the Shipwreck Clerk turned and opened a large book at the letter T.

“That wreck wasn’t reported here,” said the other, “and you won’t find it in your book.”

“At Anster, perhaps?” said the Shipwreck Clerk, closing the volume and turning round again.

“Can’t say about that,” replied the other. “I’ve never been to Anster, and haven’t looked over their books.”

“Well, you needn’t want to,” said the clerk. “They’ve got good accommodations at Anster, and the Registrar has some ideas of the duties of his post, but they have no such system of wreck reports as we have here.”

“Very like,” said the brother-in-law, and he went on with his story: “The *Thomas Hyke* was a small iron steamer of six hundred tons, and she sailed from Ulford for Valparaiso, with a cargo principally of pig-iron.”

“Pig-iron for Valparaiso?” remarked the Shipwreck Clerk. And then he knitted his brows thoughtfully, and said, “Go on.”

“She was a new vessel,” continued the narrator, “and built with water-tight compartments. Rather uncommon for a vessel of her class, but so she was. I am not a sailor, and don’t know anything about ships. I went as passenger, and there was another one, named William Anderson, and his son Sam, a boy about fifteen years old. We were all going to Valparaiso on business. I don’t remember just how many days we were out, nor do I know just where we were, but it

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was somewhere off the coast of South America when, one dark night, with a fog besides, for aught I know, for I was asleep, we ran into a steamer coming north. How we managed to do this, with room enough on both sides for all the ships in the world to pass, I don't know, but so it was. When I got on deck the other vessel had gone on, and we never saw anything more of her. Whether she sunk or got home is something I can't tell. But we pretty soon found that the *Thomas Hyke* had some of the plates in her bow badly smashed, and she took in water like a thirsty dog. The captain had the forward water-tight bulkhead shut tight, and the pumps set to work, but it was no use. That forward compartment just filled up with water, and the *Thomas Hyke* settled down with her bow clean under. Her deck was slanting forward like the side of a hill, and the propeller was lifted up so that it wouldn't have worked even if the engine had been kept going. The captain had the masts cut away, thinking this might bring her up some, but it didn't help much. There was a pretty heavy sea on, and the waves came rolling up the slant of the deck like the surf on the sea-shore. The captain gave orders to have all the hatches battened down so that water couldn't get in, and the only way by which anybody could go below was by the cabin door, which was far aft. This work of stopping up all openings in the deck was a dangerous business, for the decks sloped right down into the water, and if anybody had slipped, away he'd have gone into the ocean, with nothing to stop him. But the men made a line fast to themselves, and worked away with a good will, and soon got the deck and the house over the engine as

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tight as a bottle. The smoke-stack, which was well forward, had been broken down by a spar when the masts had been cut, and as the waves washed into the hole that it left, the captain had this plugged up with old sails, well fastened down. It was a dreadful thing to see the ship a-lying with her bows clean under water, and her stern sticking up. If it hadn't been for her water-tight compartments that were left uninjured, she would have gone down to the bottom as slick as a whistle. On the afternoon of the day after the collision the wind fell, and the sea soon became pretty smooth. The captain was quite sure that there would be no trouble about keeping afloat until some ship came along and took us off. Our flag was flying, upside down, from a pole in the stern, and if anybody saw a ship making such a guy of herself as the *Thomas Hyke* was then doing, they'd be sure to come to see what was the matter with her, even if she had no flag of distress flying. We tried to make ourselves as comfortable as we could, but this wasn't easy with everything on such a dreadful slant. But that night we heard a rumbling and grinding noise down in the hold, and the slant seemed to get worse. Pretty soon the captain roused all hands, and told us that the cargo of pig-iron was shifting and sliding down to the bow, and that it wouldn't be long before it would break through all the bulkheads, and then we'd fill and go to the bottom like a shot. He said we must all take to the boats, and get away as quick as we could. It was an easy matter launching the boats. They didn't lower them outside from the davits, but they just let 'em down on deck and slid 'em along forward into the water, and then held 'em there with

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a rope till everything was ready to start. They launched three boats, put plenty of provisions and water in 'em, and then everybody began to get aboard. But William Anderson and me and his son Sam couldn't make up our minds to get into those boats and row out on the dark, wide ocean. They were the biggest boats we had, but still they were little things enough. The ship seemed to us to be a good deal safer, and more likely to be seen when day broke, than those three boats, which might be blown off, if the wind rose, nobody knew where. It seemed to us that the cargo had done all the shifting it intended to, for the noise below had stopped, and, altogether, we agreed that we'd rather stick to the ship than go off in those boats. The captain he tried to make us go, but we wouldn't do it, and he told us if we chose to stay behind and be drowned it was our affair, and he couldn't help it. And then he said there was a small boat aft, and we'd better launch her, and have her ready in case things should get worse and we should make up our minds to leave the vessel. He and the rest then rowed off so as not to be caught in the vortex if the steamer went down, and we three stayed aboard. We launched the small boat in the way we'd seen the others launched, being careful to have ropes tied to us while we were doing it, and we put things aboard that we thought we should want. Then we went into the cabin, and waited for morning. It was a queer kind of a cabin, with a floor inclined like the roof of a house; but we sat down in the corners, and were glad to be there. The swinging lamp was burning, and it was a good deal more cheerful in there than it was outside. But about daybreak

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the grinding and rumbling down below began again, and the bow of the *Thomas Hyke* kept going down more and more; and it wasn't long before the forward bulkhead of the cabin, which was what you might call its front wall when everything was all right, was under our feet, as level as a floor, and the lamp was lying close against the ceiling that it was hanging from. You may be sure that we thought it was time to get out of that. There were benches with arms to them fastened to the floor, and by these we climbed up to the foot of the cabin stairs, which, being turned bottom upward, we went down in order to get out. When we reached the cabin door we saw part of the deck below us, standing up like the side of a house that is built in the water, as they say the houses in Venice are. We had made our boat fast to the cabin door by a long line, and now we saw her floating quietly on the water, which was very smooth, and about twenty feet below us. We drew her up as close under us as we could, and then we let the boy Sam down by a rope, and after some kicking and swinging he got into her, and then he took the oars, and kept her right under us while we scrambled down by the ropes which we had used in getting her ready. As soon as we were in the boat we cut her rope and pulled away as hard as we could, and when we got to what we thought was a safe distance we stopped to look at the *Thomas Hyke*. You never saw such a ship in all your born days. Two thirds of the hull was sunk in the water, and she was standing straight up and down, with the stern in the air, her rudder up as high as the topsail ought to be, and the screw propeller looking like the wheel on the top of one of

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those windmills that they have in the country for pumping up water. Her cargo had shifted so far forward that it had turned her right up on end, but she couldn't sink, owing to the air in the compartments that the water hadn't got into. And on the top of the whole thing was the distress flag flying from the pole which stuck out over the stern. It was broad daylight, but not a thing did we see of the other boats. We'd supposed that they wouldn't row very far, but would lay off at a safe distance until daylight; but they must have been scared and rowed farther than they intended. Well, sir, we stayed in that boat all day, and watched the *Thomas Hyke*. But she just kept as she was, and didn't seem to sink an inch. There was no use of rowing away, for we had no place to row to, and besides, we thought that passing ships would be much more likely to see that stern sticking high in the air than our little boat. We had enough to eat, and at night two of us slept while the other watched, dividing off the time, and taking turns to this. In the morning there was the *Thomas Hyke* standing stern up just as before. There was a long swell on the ocean now, and she'd rise and lean over a little on each wave, but she'd come up again just as straight as before. That night passed as the last one had, and in the morning we found we'd drifted a good deal farther from the *Thomas Hyke*, but she was floating just as she had been, like a big buoy that's moored over a sand-bar. We couldn't see a sign of the boats, and we about gave them up. We had our breakfast, which was a pretty poor meal, being nothing but hard-tack and what was left of a piece of boiled beef. After we'd sat for a while doing nothing, but feeling

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mighty uncomfortable, William Anderson said : 'Look here ; do you know that I think we would be three fools to keep on shivering all night, and living on hardtack in the daytime, when there's plenty on that vessel for us to eat and to keep us warm ? If she's floated that way for two days and two nights, there's no knowing how much longer she'll float, and we might as well go on board and get the things we want as not.' 'All right,' said I, for I was tired doing nothing, and Sam was as willing as anybody. So we rowed up to the steamer, and stopped close to the deck, which, as I said before, was standing straight up out of the water like the wall of a house. The cabin door, which was the only opening into her, was about twenty feet above us, and the ropes which we had tied to the rails of the stairs inside were still hanging down. Sam was an active youngster, and he managed to climb up one of these ropes, and when he got to the door he drew it up and tied knots in it about a foot apart, and then he let it down to us, for neither William Anderson nor me could go up a rope hand over hand without knots or something to hold on to. As it was, we had a lot of bother getting up. But we did it at last, and then we walked up the stairs, treading on the front part of each step instead of the top of it, as we would have done if the stairs had been in their proper position. When we got to the floor of the cabin, which was now perpendicular like a wall, we had to clamber down by means of the furniture, which was screwed fast, until we reached the bulkhead, which was now the floor of the cabin. Close to this bulkhead was a small room which was the steward's pantry, and here we found lots of things to eat,

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but all jumbled up in a way that made us laugh. The boxes of biscuits and the tin cans, and a lot of bottles in wicker covers, were piled up on one end of the room, and everything in the lockers and drawers was jumbled together. William Anderson and me set to work to get out what we thought we'd want, and we told Sam to climb up into some of the state-rooms, of which there were four on each side of the cabin, and get some blankets to keep us warm, as well as a few sheets, which we thought we could rig up for an awning to the boat, for the days were just as hot as the nights were cool. When we'd collected what we wanted, William Anderson and me climbed into our own rooms, thinking we'd each pack a valise with what we most wanted to save of our clothes and things. While we were doing this, Sam called out to us that it was raining. He was sitting at the cabin door, looking out. I first thought to tell him to shut the door so as to keep the rain from coming in, but when I thought how things really were, I laughed at the idea. There was a sort of little house built over the entrance to the cabin, and in one end of it was the door, and in the way the ship now was the open doorway was underneath the little house, and of course no rain could come in. Pretty soon we heard the rain pouring down, beating on the stern of the vessel like hail. We got to the stairs and looked out. The rain was falling in perfect sheets, in a way you never see except round about the tropics. ‘It's a good thing we're inside,’ said William Anderson, ‘for if we'd been out in this rain we'd been drowned in the boat.’ I agreed with him, and we made up our minds to stay where we were until the rain was over. Well, it

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rained about four hours, and when it stopped, and we looked out, we saw our little boat nearly full of water, and sunk so deep that if one of us had stepped on her she'd have gone down, sure. 'Here's a pretty kettle of fish,' said William Anderson. 'There's nothing for us to do now but to stay where we are.' I believe in his heart he was glad of that, for if ever a man was tired of a little boat, William Anderson was tired of that one we'd been in for two days and two nights. At any rate, there was no use talking about it, and we set to work to make ourselves comfortable. We got some mattresses and pillows out of the state-rooms, and when it began to get dark we lighted the lamp, which we had filled with sweet-oil from a flask in the pantry, not finding any other kind, and we hung it from the railing of the stairs. We had a good night's rest, and the only thing that disturbed me was William Anderson lifting up his head every time he turned over, and saying how much better this was than that blasted little boat. The next morning we had a good breakfast, even making some tea with a spirit-lamp we found, using brandy instead of alcohol. William Anderson and I wanted to get into the captain's room, which was near the stern and pretty high up, so as to see if there was anything there that we ought to get ready to save when a vessel should come along and pick us up. But we were not good at climbing, like Sam, and we didn't see how we could get up there. Sam said he was sure he had once seen a ladder in the compartment just forward of the bulkhead, and as William was very anxious to get up to the captain's room, we let the boy go and look for it. There was a sliding door in the bulkhead under our

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feet, and we opened this far enough to let Sam get through ; and he scrambled down like a monkey into the next compartment, which was light enough, although the lower half of it, which was next to the engine-room, was under the water-line. Sam actually found a ladder with hooks at one end of it, and while he was handing it up to us, which was very hard to do, for he had to climb up on all sorts of things, he let it topple over, and the end with the iron hooks fell against the round glass of one of the port-holes. The glass was very thick and strong, but the ladder came down very heavy and shivered it. As bad luck would have it, this window was below the water-line, and the water came rushing in in a big spout. We chucked blankets down to Sam for him to stop up the hole, but 'twas of no use, for it was hard for him to get at the window, and when he did the water came in with such force that he couldn't get a blanket into the hole. We were afraid he'd be drowned down there, and told him to come out as quick as he could. He put up the ladder again, and hooked it on to the door in the bulkhead, and we held it while he climbed up. Looking down through the doorway, we saw, by the way the water was pouring in at the opening, that it wouldn't be long before that compartment was filled up. So we shoved the door to and made it all tight, and then said William Anderson : ‘The ship’ll sink deeper and deeper as that fills up, and the water may get up to the cabin door, and we must go and make that as tight as we can.’ Sam had pulled the ladder up after him, and this we found of great use in getting to the foot of the cabin stairs. We shut the cabin door, and locked and bolted it, and as it fitted pretty

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tight, we didn't think it would let in much water if the ship sunk that far. But over the top of the cabin stairs were a couple of folding doors, which shut down horizontally when the ship was in its proper position, and which were only used in very bad, cold weather. These we pulled to and fastened tight, thus having a double protection against the water. Well, we didn't get this done any too soon, for the water did come up to the cabin door, and a little trickled in from the outside door and through the cracks in the inner one. But we went to work and stopped these up with strips from the sheets, which we crammed well in with our pocket-knives. Then we sat down on the steps and waited to see what would happen next. The doors of all the state-rooms were open, and we could see through the thick plate-glass windows in them, which were all shut tight, that the ship was sinking more and more as the water came in. Sam climbed up into one of the after state-rooms, and said the outside water was nearly up to the stern, and pretty soon we looked up to the two port-holes in the stern, and saw that they were covered with water. And as more and more water could be seen there, and as the light came through less easily, we knew that we were sinking under the surface of the ocean. 'It's a mighty good thing,' said William Anderson, 'that no water can get in here.' William had a hopeful kind of mind, and always looked on the bright side of things. But I must say that I was dreadfully scared when I looked through those stern windows and saw water instead of sky. It began to get duskier and duskier as we sank lower and lower, but still we could see pretty well, for it's astonishing how much light comes

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down through water. After a little while we noticed that the light remained about the same, and then William Anderson he sings out: 'Hooray, we've stopped sinking!' 'What difference does that make?' says I. 'We must be thirty or forty feet under water, and more yet, for aught I know.' 'Yes, that may be,' said he, 'but it is clear that all the water has got into that compartment that can get in, and we have sunk just as far down as we are going.' 'But that don't help matters,' said I. 'Thirty or forty feet under water is just as bad as a thousand as to drowning a man.' 'Drowning!' said William. 'How are you going to be drowned? No water can get in here.' 'Nor no air, either,' said I. 'And people are drowned for want of air, as I take it.' 'It would be a queer sort of thing,' said William, 'to be drowned in the ocean and yet stay as dry as a chip. But it's no use being worried about air. We've got air enough here to last us for ever so long. This stern compartment is the biggest in the ship, and it's got lots of air in it. Just think of that hold! It must be nearly full of air. The stern compartment of the hold has got nothing in it but sewing-machines. I saw 'em loading her. The pig-iron was mostly amidships, or at least forward of this compartment. Now, there's no kind of a cargo that'll accommodate as much air as sewing-machines. They're packed in wooden frames, not boxes, and don't fill up half the room they take. There's air all through and around 'em. It's a very comforting thing to think the hold isn't filled up solid with bales of cotton or wheat in bulk.' It might be comforting, but I couldn't get much good out of it. And now Sam, who'd been scrambling all over the cabin to see

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how things were going on, sung out that the water was leaking in a little again at the cabin door, and around some of the iron frames of the windows. 'It's a lucky thing,' said William Anderson, 'that we didn't sink any deeper, or the pressure of the water would have burst in those heavy glasses. And what we've got to do now is to stop up all the cracks. The more we work, the livelier we'll feel.' We tore off more strips of sheets, and went all round, stopping up cracks wherever we found them. 'It's fortunate,' said William Anderson, 'that Sam found that ladder, for we would have had hard work getting to the windows of the stern state-rooms without it, but by resting it on the bottom step of the stairs, which now happens to be the top one, we can get to any part of the cabin.' I couldn't help thinking that if Sam hadn't found the ladder it would have been a good deal better for us; but I didn't want to damp William's spirits, and I said nothing.

"And now I beg your pardon, sir," said the narrator, addressing the Shipwreck Clerk, "but I forgot that you said you'd finish this story yourself. Perhaps you'd like to take it up just here?"

The Shipwreck Clerk seemed surprised, and had apparently forgotten his previous offer. "Oh, no," said he, "tell your own story. This is not a matter of business."

"Very well, then," said the brother-in-law of J. George Watts, "I'll go on. We made everything as tight as we could, and then we got our supper, having forgotten all about dinner, and being very hungry. We didn't make any tea, and we didn't light the lamp, for we knew that would use up air; but we

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made a better meal than three people sunk out of sight in the ocean had a right to expect. ‘What troubles me most,’ said William Anderson, as he turned in, ‘is the fact that if we are forty feet under water, our flagpole must be covered up. Now, if the flag was sticking out, upside down, a ship sailing by would see it and would know there was something wrong.’ ‘If that’s all that troubles you,’ said I, ‘I guess you’ll sleep easy. And if a ship was to see the flag, I wonder how they’d know we were down here, and how they’d get us out if they did !’ ‘Oh, they’d manage it,’ said William Anderson. ‘Trust those sea-captains for that.’ And then he went to sleep. The next morning the air began to get mighty disagreeable in the part of the cabin where we were, and then William Anderson he says : ‘What we’ve got to do is to climb up into the stern state-rooms, where the air is purer. We can come down here to get our meals, and then go up again to breathe comfortable.’ ‘And what are we going to do when the air up there gets foul ?’ says I to William, who seemed to be making arrangements for spending the summer in our present quarters. ‘Oh, that’ll be all right,’ said he. ‘It don’t do to be extravagant with air any more than with anything else. When we’ve used up all there is in this cabin, we can bore holes through the floor into the hold and let in air from there. If we’re economical, there’ll be enough to last for dear knows how long.’ We passed the night each in a state-room, sleeping on the end wall instead of the berth, and it wasn’t till the afternoon of the next day that the air of the cabin got so bad we thought we’d have some fresh. So we went down on the bulkhead, and with

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an auger that we found in the pantry we bored three holes, about a yard apart, in the cabin floor, which was now one of the walls of the room, just as the bulk-head was the floor, and the stern-end, where the two round windows were, was the ceiling or roof. We each took a hole, and I tell you it was pleasant to breathe the air which came in from the hold. 'Isn't this jolly?' said William Anderson. 'And we ought to be mighty glad that that hold wasn't loaded with codfish or soap. But there's nothing that smells better than new sewing-machines that haven't ever been used, and this air is pleasant enough for anybody.' By William's advice we made three plugs, by which we stopped up the holes when we thought we'd had air enough for the present. 'And now,' says he, 'we needn't climb up into those awkward state-rooms any more. We can just stay down here and be comfortable, and let in air when we want it.' 'And how long do you suppose that air in the hold is going to last?' said I. 'Oh, ever so long,' said he, 'using it so economically as we do. And when it stops coming out lively through these little holes, as I suppose it will after a while, we can saw a big hole in this flooring, and go into the hold and do our breathing, if we want to.' That evening we did saw a hole about a foot square, so as to have plenty of air while we were asleep, but we didn't go into the hold, it being pretty well filled up with machines, though the next day Sam and I sometimes stuck our heads in for a good sniff of air, though William Anderson was opposed to this, being of the opinion that we ought to put ourselves on short rations of breathing, so as to make the supply of air hold out as long as possible. 'But

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what's the good,' said I to William, 'of trying to make the air hold out if we've got to be suffocated in this place, after all?' 'What's the good?' says he. 'Haven't you enough biscuits, and canned meats, and plenty of other things to eat, and a barrel of water in that room opposite the pantry, not to speak of wine and brandy if you want to cheer yourself up a bit, and haven't we good mattresses to sleep on, and why shouldn't we try to live and be comfortable as long as we can?' 'What I want,' said I, 'is to get out of this box. The idea of being shut up in here down under the water is more than I can stand. I'd rather take my chances going up to the surface and swimming about till I found a piece of the wreck or something to float on.' 'You needn't think of anything of that sort,' said William, 'for if we were to open a door or a window to get out, the water'd rush in and drive us back and fill up this place in no time, and then the whole concern would go to the bottom. And what would you do if you did get to the top of the water? It's not likely you'd find anything there to get on, and if you did you wouldn't live very long floating about with nothing to eat. No, sir,' says he, 'what we've got to do is to be content with the comforts we have around us, and something will turn up to get us out of this. You see if it don't.' There was no use talking against William Anderson, and I didn't say any more about getting out. As for Sam, he spent his time at the windows of the state-rooms, a-looking out. We could see a good way into the water, further than you would think, and we sometimes saw fishes, especially porpoises, swimming about, most likely trying to find out what a ship was doing hanging bows down

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under the water. What troubled Sam was that a swordfish might come along and jab his sword through one of the windows. In that case it would be all up, or rather down, with us. Every now and then he'd sing out, 'Here comes one!' And then, just as I'd give a jump, he'd say, 'No, it isn't, it's a porpoise.' I thought from the first, and I think now, that it would have been a great deal better for us if that boy hadn't been along. That night there was a good deal of motion to the ship, and she swung about and rose up and down more than she had done since we'd been left in her. 'There must be a big sea running on top,' said William Anderson, 'and if we were up there we'd be tossed about dreadful. Now the motion down here is just as easy as a cradle, and, what's more, we can't be sunk very deep, for if we were there wouldn't be any motion at all.' About noon the next day we felt a sudden tremble and shake run through the whole ship, and far down under us we heard a rumbling and grinding that nearly scared me out of my wits. I first thought we'd struck bottom, but William he said that couldn't be, for it was just as light in the cabin as it had been, and if we'd gone down it would have grown much darker, of course. The rumbling stopped after a little while, and then it seemed to grow lighter instead of darker, and Sam, who was looking up at the stern windows over our heads, he sung out, 'Sky!' And, sure enough, we could see the blue sky, as clear as daylight, through those windows! And then the ship she turned herself on the slant, pretty much as she had been when her forward compartment first took in water, and we found ourselves standing on the cabin floor instead of the bulkhead. I was near

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one of the open state-rooms, and as I looked in, there was the sunlight coming through the wet glass in the window, and more cheerful than anything I ever saw before in this world. William Anderson he just made one jump, and unscrewing one of the state-room windows, he jerked it open. We had thought the air inside was good enough to last some time longer, but when that window was open and the fresh air came rushing in, it was a different sort of thing, I can tell you. William put his head out and looked up and down and all around. 'She's nearly all out of water,' he shouted, 'and we can open the cabin door!' Then we all three rushed at those stairs, which were nearly right side up now, and we had the cabin doors open in no time. When we looked out we saw that the ship was truly floating pretty much as she had been when the captain and crew left her, though we all agreed that her deck didn't slant as much forward as it did then. 'Do you know what's happened?' sung out William Anderson, after he'd stood still for a minute to look around and think. 'That bobbing up and down that the vessel got last night shook up and settled down the pig-iron inside of her, and the iron plates in the bow, that were smashed and loosened by the collision, have given way under the weight, and the whole cargo of pig-iron has burst through and gone to the bottom. Then, of course, up we came. Didn't I tell you something would happen to make us all right?'

"Well, I won't make this story any longer than I can help. The next day after that we were taken off by a sugar-ship bound north, and we were carried safe back to Ulford, where we found our captain and the

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crew, who had been picked up by a ship after they'd been three or four days in their boats. This ship had sailed our way to find us, which, of course, she couldn't do, as at that time we were under water and out of sight.

“And now, sir,” said the brother-in-law of J. George Watts to the Shipwreck Clerk, “to which of your classes does this wreck of mine belong?”

“Gents,” said the Shipwreck Clerk, rising from his seat, “it's four o'clock, and at that hour this office closes!”

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AN elderly negro man, Uncle Enoch by name, short of stature and with hair and beard beginning to grizzle, but with arms and body yet stout and strong, stood back of his little log house, not far from a Virginia public road, endeavoring to pull his axe out of a knotty black-gum log. Often and often, when his stock of fire-wood had diminished to this one log, had Uncle Enoch tried to split it, and now he was trying again. While thus engaged, there came to him his son Dick. This was a youth rather taller and lighter in color than his father, of an active and good-natured disposition, and hitherto supposed to be devoid of disturbing ambitions.

“Look a-heah, daddy,” said he, “won’t yuh lemme go ter Washin’ton nex’ week?”

Uncle Enoch stopped tugging at his axe, and turned round to look at Dick. “What fur?” said he.

“I’s gwine ter be a page in Congress.”

“What’s dat?” asked his father, his bright eyes opening very wide. “What yuh want ter do dat fur?”

“A page is one of dem chaps as runs round an’ waits on de congressmen when dey’re doin’ dere work in Washin’ton. Dere’s lots of ‘em, an’ some of ‘em is culled. Dey hab ter be mighty peart an’ cut

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around an' fetch de congressmen ebery't'ng dey wants. An' dey don't have ter work fur no fifty cents a day, nudder. Dey gits sebenteen hunderd dollars a year."

"What's dat?" exclaimed Uncle Enoch. "Yuh means de whole kit an' boodle uv 'em gits dat."

"No, I don't," said Dick. "Ebery one gits it fur hisse'f."

"Yuh shuh ob dat?"

"Yes, sah," replied Dick. "I heared it all from a man down at de cross-roads, when I took ole Billy ter be shod dis ebenin'. He wus tellin' a lot o' folks all about it at de stoah. An' won't yuh lemme go nex' week?"

The old man put his hand on his axe-handle and stood reflectively.

Uncle Enoch had been born a slave, and had been an honest and industrious servant, whose only failing was that he was inclined to think himself better at all times, and to dress himself better on Sundays, than his companions. And now that he was as free as anybody, he was still honest and industrious, and still went to church with the highest white hat, the biggest shirt-collar, and the longest coat of anybody in the congregation. As he grew older his opinion of himself did not decrease, and he was very fond of exhorting his fellow-members in church, and of giving them advice in private whenever he saw cause for it, and this very often in the shape of some old fable, which generally became strangely twisted as it passed through the old man's mental organism.

"Look a-heah, Dick," said he, "I's gwine ter tell yuh a story. It's one uv ole Mahsr George's stories,

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an' I've heared him tell it often ter the chillun. Dere was a mouse what lived in de city,—I dunno 'zaectly whar, but jus' as like as not it was Washin'ton,—an' he went ter see a frien' uv hisn who had a plantation. De plantation mouse he were glad ter see de udder one, an' put him in de comp'ny chahmber, an' gib him de bes' he had. But de fine gemman he didn't 'pear ter be satisfy wid nuffin but light bread an' cohn-pone fur breakfus', an' chicken an' ham fur dinner, an' he says, says he :

““Yuh don’ git canvisback ducks down heah, I reckin?’

““No, sah !’ sez de plantation mouse.

““Nur tar’pins, stewed in Madary wine?’

““No, sah !’

““Nur eysters, fresh from de bay ebery mawnin’,
nur ice-cream all de colors ob de rainbow, an’ little
candy-balls what go off pop when you pull ’em, an’ a
whole bottle ob champain ter each pusson?’

““No, sah !’ sez de plantation mouse, a-fannin’ ob
hisse’f wid he han’kercher.

““Well, now, jus’ yuh look a-heah,’ sez de udder
one, gwine out on de po’ch ter smoke he cigar, ‘yuh
come ter de city an’ see me, an’ when you tas’e what
dem dar t’ings is like, yuh won’t be content fur ter stay
no more on dis yere no-’count farm, so fur from de
railroad.’

“So, soon as he sell he ’baccer, de plantation mouse
he go ter see his city frien’. He glad ter see him, an’
sot him right down ter a pow’ful good dinner, wid all
de canvisback ducks an’ de tar’pins an’ de eysters an’
de champain, an’ de udder t’ings dat he done tell ’bout.

““If I’d ‘a’ knowed you wus a-comin’,’ sez de city

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mouse, 'I'd had a reg'lar comp'ny dinner. But yuh'll have ter go 'long an' jus' take pot-luck wid us dis time.'

"Den you didn't git my letter?" sez de plantation mouse.

"No, sah. Reckin yuhr man done forgot ter put it in de pos'-office.'

"So dey sot an' eat till dey mos' like to bus', an' de plantation mouse he wonner what he would 'a' had if he frien' had done got he letter.

"Jus' as dey was lightin' dere cigars an' puttin' dey heels up on two cheers, de dinin'-room door open, an' in walk de sheriff ob de county.

"Look a-heah, kurnel," sez he, 'have yuh got de money ready fur all de ducks an' de eysters an' de wine you've had fur yuhse'f, an' de slab meat an' de cohn from de West fur yuhr han's? Yuh know I said I wouldn't give yuh no longer nur ter-day.'

"De city mouse he turn pale, an' he tuk de plantation mouse inter one corner, an' sez he :

"Look a-heah, kin yuh len' me two or free t'ousand dollars till ter-morrer mawnin', when de bank opens?"

"Den de udder mouse he pull a drefful poor mouf, an' he sez :

"I's pow'ful sorry, but it rained so much in de low groun's las' year dat my cohn wus all spiled, an' dere wasn't no rain on de high groun's, an' de cohn dere wus all wilted, an' de fros' done cotch my 'baccer craps, an' I didn't have money enuf fur ter buy qui-nine fur de han's."

"Den de town mouse he sez ter de sheriff, sez he :

"You call aroun' Monday mawnin', an' I'll pay yuh dat money. I wus a-'spectin' my frien' ter-day, an' done forgot ter e'lect it."

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““Dat won’t do,’ sez de sheriff. ‘I’s heared dat story often ’nuf.’ An’ he rung he auction bell, an’ he lebied on eberyting in de house, an’ as dey didn’t fotch enuf, he sold dat city mouse an’ dat plantation mouse fur slaves.”

Dick uttered an exclamation of horror at this direful conclusion of the story.

“Now look a-heah, boy,” continued Uncle Enoch, “ef yuh t’inks yuh is gwine down ter Washin’ton ter git tar’pins an’ eysters an’ champain out ob dem congressmen, yuh won’t be tuk an’ sold, ’cause dey can’t do dat now, but yuh’ll find yuhse’f gobbled up some way wuss dan dat plantation mouse wus.”

Dick grumbled that he wasn’t a mouse, and he wasn’t “gwine arter tar’pins, nur eysters, nudder.”

“Jus’ yuh go ’long an’ pick up some chips an’ trash fur ter make de fire,” said his father, “an’ don’ talk ter me no moh ob dat foolishness.”

Dick walked slowly off to do as he was bid, and for a long time Uncle Enoch remained standing by the twisted black-gum log without striking it a blow.

Uncle Enoch was a skilful and practised ox-driver, working in that capacity for the farmer on whose land he lived. All the next day he walked meditatively by the side of the slowly moving Bob and Blinker, hauling wood from the mountain. He did not shout as much as usual to his oxen, but he guided them with all his customary precision around stumps, rocks, and the varied impediments of the rough woodland road.

“Yuh Dick,” said he to his son, in the evening, “is yuh done gib up all dat foolishness ‘bout goin’ ter Washin’ton?”

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“ ‘Tain’t no foolishness,” muttered Dick.

“ Why, boy,” said his father, “ ‘pears ter me yuh is too ole fur dat sort o’ t’ing.”

“ It don’t make no kind o’ diff’rence how ole a page is,” said Dick. “ Dat man said so hisse’f. He sez dey got ‘em all ages.”

“ Dat so, shuh?” asked his father.

“ Sartin shuh,” said Dick.

“ And dey gits sebenteen hundred dollars a year?”

“ Yes,” said Dick. “ An’ besides dat, dey can make lots ob money blackin’ boots an’ holdin’ hosses an’ runnin’ arrants fur de congressmen, when court’s out.”

Uncle Enoch looked steadfastly at his son for some moments without speaking. Then he said, “ Look a-heah, boy, I’s made up my mind ‘bout dis yere business. Ef all dat ‘ar money’s ter be got by pagin’, I agrees ter de notion.”

“ Hi-yi!” shouted Dick, beginning to dance.

“ Yuh needn’t cut up no sich capers,” said his father. “ Yuh ain’t gwine. I’s gwine mese’f.”

If Dick could have turned pale he would have done so. He stood speechless.

“ Yes, sah,” continued Uncle Enoch. “ Ef it don’t make no diff’rence how ole de pages is, I kin step roun’ as lively as any uv ‘em, an’ kin wait on de congressmen better’n any boy. I knows what de gemmen wants, an’ I knows how ter do it. I’s waited on ‘em ‘fore yuh wus bawn, boy, an’ yuh neber libed ‘mong white folks, nohow. Jus’ yuh take dat ox-whip, termorer mawnin’, an’ tell Mahsr Greg’ry dat I’s done gone ter Washin’ton, an’ dat yuh’ve come ter drive de oxen. Yuh’s ole enuf fur dat now, an’ it’s time yuh wus beginnin’.”

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Downcast as Dick was when he heard that he was not going to be a page in the halls of Congress, his spirits immediately rose when he was told that he was to take Uncle Enoch's place as ox-driver. To crack the long whip and guide the slow progress of Bob and Blinker was to him a high delight and honor, which impressed him the more forcibly because it was so totally unexpected. The government position had held forth glittering advantages which had greatly attracted him, but which his mind did not entirely comprehend. But to drive the oxen was a real thing, a joy and a dignity which he knew all about. Dick was entirely satisfied. As to the page's salary which his memory or his ears had so greatly exaggerated, he did not even think of it.

Uncle Enoch determined not to announce his intention to his neighbors, nor to take counsel of any one. He went into the house, and after electrifying his family with the statement of his intended step into what was to them wealth and high position, he set them all to work to get him ready for an early start the next morning. Washing, ironing, patching, and packing went on during a great part of the night, his wife, Aunt Maria, his three daughters, and even Dick, doing their utmost to fit him out for his great undertaking.

“What I's gwine ter do wid dat sebenteen hunderd dollars,” said Uncle Enoch, as he sat on a low chair sewing up a gap in one of his Sunday boots, “is ter buy dis track o' land on de hill back heah, an' make a wine-yard uv it. No use foolin' no more wid little 'tater-patches, an' cabbyges, an' t'ree or foah dozen hills o' cohn. I'll sell de grapes, an' buy all dat sort o'

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t'ing. At de wine-cellar in town dey'll take all de grapes yuh kin raise, an' ef I have ter buy a hoss an' wagun ter haul 'em inter town, yuh won't see dis yere fam'ly walkin' ter church no moh, wid de mud up ter dere knees an' de hot sun br'ilin' on ter dere heads."

A little after daylight the next morning, Uncle Enoch, wearing his tall white hat with the broad band of crape around it which it had on when it was given to him, with his highest and stiffest shirt-collar, a long black coat reaching nearly to his heels, a pair of blue-jean trousers rolled up at the ankles, his enormous Sunday boots well blacked, in one hand a very small cowhide trunk tied up with a rope and carried in the manner of a violin-case, a vast umbrella with a horn handle in the other hand, and the greater part of his recently paid month's wages in his pocket, started off to walk three miles to the railroad station, on his way to become a congressional page.

Dick assumed the ox-whip, and as there was no one else to take the vacated place, he cracked it in pride and glory over the heads of Bob and Blinker, and although they ran into more stumps and got into more deep ruts than was good for themselves or the cart, the winter wood of Mr. Gregory continued to be hauled.

One week, and two weeks, passed on without news from Uncle Enoch, and then Aunt Maria began to get impatient. "Look a-heah, Dick," she said, "when you comes home ter-night, an' has had yuhr supper, an' has done split up dem ole rails, what's too short fur de fence anyway, fur 'tain't no use fur yuh ter try no moh on dat black-gum log what yuh daddy done went away an' lef, an' ef he don' come back soon he

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won't find no fence at all, I reckin, when he do come, yuh jus' sot down an' write him a letter, an' tell him 'tain't no use fur him ter be sabin' up all dat sebenteen hunderd dollars ter buy wine-yards while his chillun's gwine about wid sea'ce no clo'es ter dere backs.

"Dere's yuhr sis'r Charlotte, what has ter go ter church wid dem light-blue slippers Miss Sally gib her, an' no stockuns, an' no wonner de people laf at her. An' dere's yuhr daddy makin' all dat money down dere in Washin'ton wid de congressmen.

"An' she a gal, too, what's done won de prize t'ree times in de cake-walk. I 'spec' he's done forgot what I tole him 'bout de weddin'-ring fur me. I done tole him ter buy it wid de fus' money he got an' ter send it in a letter. I's neber had none yit, though we wus both married 'long back befoh de war.

"An' it's no use waitin', nudder, fur little Jim's funeral till he comes back. He kin sen' de money fur de cake an' wine jus' as well as not, an' Brudder Anderson is ready, he tole me las' Sund'y, wid de fax an' de tex. Little Jim's been dead now nigh on ter two yeah, an' it's time his funeral wus preached.

"I ain't got no 'jections ter de wine-yard, spesh'ly ef we hab ter hab a wagun ter haul de grapes, but I don' want yuhr daddy ter come back heah an' find hisse'f 'shamed uv his fam'ly arter livin' down dar 'mong all dem quality folks. I'll send Charlotte dis mawnin' to borrer a sheet uv paper an' a pen an' ink from Miss Sally, an' see ef she won't let her pick up some apples in de orchard while she's dar, an' p'r'aps she'll give her a bucket uv buttermilk ef she's done churned yistiddy. An' yuh put all dat in de letter, an' sen' it off jus' as soon as yuh kin."

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Dick willingly undertook this business, having made up his mind, while his mother was talking to him, to put in a few words on his own account. And before he began the important epistle each of his sisters had something to say to him in private in regard to suggestions which they wished him to make to the head of the family.

The letter moved more slowly than Bob and Blinker over the roughest road. After three nights' work it was only half done, for Dick found a pen much more difficult to handle than a whip, and besides being a very stumbling speller, invariably went to sleep over his paper after a quarter of an hour's work. Late in the afternoon of the fourth day after the commencement of this literary enterprise, Dick was standing by the black-gum log, with the axe in his hand, wondering if it would be better to take another rail from the forlorn fence around the little yard—for what difference could it make when there were so many open places already?—or to split up a solitary post which having nothing attached to it was clearly useless, when he saw upon the highroad a figure approaching him.

It wore a tall white hat with a broad band of rusty crape around it; it had on a high stiff shirt-collar and a long black coat; in one hand it carried an umbrella with a rough horn handle, and in the other a little hair trunk tied up with a rope. It had a bright and flashing eye, and a determined step.

It did not go on to the house, but, turning from the public road, came through a gap in the fence, and walked straight up to the astonished Dick.

“Look a-heah, yuh Dick,” said Uncle Enoch, put-

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ting down his little trunk, "who done tole yuh all dat foolishness about gwine ter Washin'ton ter wait on de congressmen, an' gittin' sebenteen hunderd dollars a yeah?"

"It wus a man at de cross-roads," said Dick, "wid a red beard. He done brought some hosses ober from de cou't-house. I dunno his name."

"Is he bigger nur yuh is?" asked his father.

"Oh, yes," said Dick, "more'n twice as big."

"Well, den, yuh lef him alone," said Uncle Enoch, with great decision and energy, "yuh lef him alone. I hopes, boy," the old man continued, wiping his face with his great blue-and-yellow handkerchief, "dat yuh's gwine ter l'arn a lesson from dis yere bis'ness. It makes me t'ink ob two no-'count beasts dat wus once loafin' in a little clearin' dat had been buhned fur a seed-patch. Dey wus stannin' in de sun ter warm deyse'fs, bein' too pow'ful lazy ter cut some wood an' make a fire. One wus a gy-raffe, an' de udder wus a kangerroo. De gy-raffe he look at de kangerroo, an' he begun ter larf.

""It's mighty cur'us," sez he, 'ter see a pore critter like yuh, wid some legs short an' some legs long. Ef I wus yuh I'd go ter de wood-pile, an' I'd chop dem hin' legs off de same len't' as de foh ones, so yuh'd go about like common folks, an' not be larfed at.'

"Dese remarks dey make de ha'r riz on de kangerroo's back, he so mad angry.

""Yuh suh'tinely is a gay boy," sez he ter de gy-raffe, 'ter stan' up dere an' preach like dat, wid yer hin' legs short as plow-hannels an' yuhr foh legs too long fur butter-bean poles, so dat yuhr back slopes down like de roof of a ice-house. Ef I wus yuh I'd go ter de

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wood-pile, an' I'd chop off dat ar long neck close ter de head, I'd be so 'shamed.'

"Now, boy," continued Uncle Enoch, "dere's lots ob stories about one eberlastin' fool, but dat's de only story I knows 'bout two uv 'em. An' now jes yuh go inter de house, an' tell de folks I's gwine ter put a new cracker on de ox-whip, an' ef any ob dem sez Washin'ton ter me, I'll make 'em dance Jerusalem!"

Dick walked into the house to deliver this message, and as he went he said to himself, "I reckin de plantation mouse done gin up he wine-yard."

THE CLOVERFIELDS CARRIAGE

THE CLOVERFIELDS CARRIAGE

NOT far from the roadside, in one of the southern counties of Virginia, there stood a neat log cabin, inhabited by a worthy negro couple known as Uncle Elijah and Aunt Maria. These two had belonged to a widow lady who owned the estate of Cloverfields, about three miles away, but when, a few years before the opening of our story, the close of the Civil War had set them free, they, in common with nearly all the negroes in the county, thought it incumbent upon them, as an assertion of their independence, to leave their former owners, and either work for themselves or go into service elsewhere. Thus there was a general shifting from plantation to plantation. Uncle Elijah and his wife, both now past middle age, left the place where they had been born and raised, and hired this cabin on a neighboring plantation, where, by day's labor and odd jobs on the part of the husband, and washing and ironing and chicken-raising on the part of the wife, they managed to live in moderate comfort.

Elijah had been the family coachman, and he had found it a hard thing to resign the dignity of this position. But had he retained it he would virtually have admitted to all his brethren and sisters that

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freedom had done nothing for him. In order to show that he was now director of his own fortunes, it was necessary that he should drop the reins by which he had so skilfully directed and controlled the two black carriage-horses which had been his especial care since their early colthood.

But his love for his old mistress and his sense of his former dignity never left him, and now, when from afar he saw approaching the familiar carriage, he would drop his work, or get up from his meal, and watch it until it had entirely disappeared from sight. Sometimes, if it were near enough, he would advance, hat in hand, to speak to his old mistress. But this he did not often do—people might think he wanted to go back.

One autumn evening, just about dusk, as Uncle Elijah came out of his cabin, he perceived, near the top of a long hill on the road, the Cloverfields carriage and horses. Other eyes in the growing gloom might not have known what vehicle it was, but the eyes of Uncle Elijah could make no mistake. As he stood and gazed they sparkled with emotion.

“Whar Miss Jane gwine dis time o’ night? An’ wot’s de matter wid dat kerridge?” he ejaculated. “I’ll be dangdiddled ef de eberlastin’ fool dat’s dribin’ hain’t gwine an’ chain’ up de hin’ wheel as ef it wus a hay-wagun. An’ who’s de no-’count idyit wot can’t drike down Red Hill widout chainin’ de wheel? Lor’! how he do bump de stones! An’ how dat mus’ rile Miss Jane! But I reckin she mus’ done got use’ ter bein’ riled, a-pickin’ up all sorts o’ niggahs ter drike her kerridge.”

When the vehicle reached the bottom of the hill,

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not far from the cabin, it stopped, and the driver got down to unchain the wheel. Possessed by a sudden thought, Uncle Elijah rushed into his house, from which his wife was happily absent, clapped on his hat, and seized his coat. Keeping well away from the road, he ran toward the carriage, climbed the fence, and approached the vehicle in the rear, where he would not be seen by any of its occupants. When he reached the man, who had just unfastened the chain, the soul of Uncle Elijah was filled with righteous indignation at finding it was Montague Braxton, a negro shoemaker of the neighborhood. Without a word he seized the cobbler-coachman by the collar, including a good part of one ear in his grasp, and led him away from the carriage, Montague, who knew who had clutched him, submitting without a word. When they had hurriedly gone a dozen steps Elijah hissed in the other's ear :

“Is you comin’ back ter-night?”

“Yaas,” whispered the shoemaker, very much astonished at the manner of his interviewer.

“Well, den, jus’ you go ’long up ter my house, split de wood fur Aun’ M’riar, fotch a bucket ob water from de spring, an’ stay dar till I comes back. I’s gwine ter drike dis kerridge myse’f. Ain’t got no time ter say no moh. Now, git!”

Montague, who knew Uncle ’Lijah as a pillar of strength in the church, as well as a pillar of not very easily restrained strength in his own proper person, made no answer, but noiselessly slipped away. Elijah passed quickly around the carriage, keeping at a little distance from it to avoid being recognized by those within, although he scarcely need have feared this in

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the dusky light, mounted to the elevated seat in front, and, taking up the reins and whip, started the horses, and the equipage moved on. Now sat Uncle Elijah like a king upon his throne, and his soul was moved within him with a joy that he had not known for years. Here were Gamma and Delta, the two horses that he had driven so long, a little older, a little browner in their manes and tails, but still the same good horses, with plenty of strength and spirit left. Here was the same old harness,—he could recognize it even in the dark,—badly kept and badly put on, but still the same. Here were the reins that oncee no hand but his had ever dared to touch ; here the whip, very old now and shabby, with a miserable new lash on it, but still the same whip he used to wield ; here was the high seat on which he alone had sat from the time he became a man in years until that day when his freedom made him another man.

Now the thoughts of the regenerated coachman ran riot in his brain. Indignation toward the shoemaker who had dared to drive the family carriage of his old mistress on a night which promised to be as dark as this, first took entire possession of him.

“Dat no-’count cobbler !” he said to himself. “Wot he know ’bout dribin’? An’ o’ nights, too ! An’ wid de crick up ; an’ wid de water all ober de road ’longside fur harf a mile ; an’ de road pas’ Colonel Tom Giles’s all washed so dat he couldn’t help slidin’ inter de gully to sabe his soul, ef he hadn’t fus’ druv inter de crick, an’ tumbled de kerridge an’ hosses, an’ his own eberlastin’ fool se’f, top o’ Miss Jane, an’ mos’ likely little Miss Jane an’ Miss Almira

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Gay. But dey's all right now I's dribin'. You ken bet your life on dat."

If any one had heard this remark, he would have been quite safe in accepting the wager, for, by day or by night, washed by rains, covered by freshets, or in their normal condition, Uncle Elijah knew the roads in this neighborhood better than any man alive. Even since he had become a freeman he had studied the difficulties and obstructions of the highways as he walked to and from his work. "Ef I was a-dribin' hyar," he would say to himself, "I'd put dis fron' wheel roun' dat little stone, den one small twis' 'u'd bring de hin' wheel on dis side ob it, an' I'd clean miss de big rock in de udder rut."

Remembering and avoiding the stones, deep ruts, and encroaching gullies, Elijah, like a pilot who steers past the rocks and sand-bars which lie under the water, as the road now lay in the darkness of the night, went steadily on, without bump or jolt of any account. Passing the flooded part of the road without deviating a foot to the right or left of the proper course, passing the tobacco-field of Colonel Giles, where the rains had washed the road into a shelving hillside, without bumping an exposed rock or sliding toward a gully, he reached the higher and more level portion of the road, which was now so comparatively good and comparatively clear, to the sharp eyes of horses and driver, that Elijah went on at a fair pace, now and then waving his whip and straightening himself up as a man who breathes his native air once more. Suddenly a dreadful thought flashed across his mind, and he barely checked himself from pulling the horses back on their haunches.

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"Whar's I gwine?" said he, almost aloud. "Dat double, eberlastin' fool shoemaker neber tole me! Whar kin Miss Jane, an' mos' like little Miss Jane an' Miss Almira Gay, be gwine at dis time? An' comin' back ter-night, too! Dey mus' be 'tendin' ter spen' de ebenin' somewhar—but whar?"

Elijah now revolved in his mind every place to which he thought the family might be going. So far he had made no mistake, because there had been no turn in the road. And although he had passed the place of Colonel Tom Giles, they could not be going to see him, for he was an old bachelor, living alone, and, besides, had gone to Richmond. A short distance ahead the road branched, and in one direction led to the house of Dr. Marshall Gordon, distant about a mile, and in the other to the hospitable mansion of General William Tucker.

"Dey can't be gwine fur de doctor fur anybody sick," thought Elijah, "fur if it had been dat dey'd sent a boy on a hoss, an' not hitched up de kerridge wid a shoemaker ter drible. An' I'd be dreffel 'shamed ter take 'em more'n four miles ter de gin'ral's ef dey wasn't gwine dar."

The nearer he approached the fork of the road the more completely Uncle Elijah became convinced that he could not decide this important question for himself. It was absolutely necessary that he should get down and ask his old mistress where she was going. This was a terribly hard thing for him to do. He would be obliged to tell the whole story, and to admit that his affection for her, as strong as ever, had prompted him to take the driver's seat. And this was to relinquish a portion of his new freedom and manhood. But it had to be done, for the fork of the

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road was reached. Drawing up his horses, Elijah descended from his seat, and with the reins in one hand, for he was not, like the cobbler, a man to leave his horses standing free in the road, he reverently opened the carriage door.

“Miss Jane,” said he, “I ‘spec’ you s’prised ter see me dribin’, but I couldn’t stan’ still an’ let dat no’count shoemaker, wot don’ know nuffin’ ‘bout hosses, nor de roads nuther, an’ night comin’ on pitch-dark, drike you. He hadn’t eben sense ‘nuf ter tell me whar you’s gwine, so I begs you’ll ‘scuse me fur gittin’ down ter ax you.”

They were now in the heavily shaded portion of the road, and the interior of the carriage was quite dark. From the farthest corner of the back seat came a thin, low voice which said to him: “Keep on now to the kyars.”

This reply surprised Elijah in several ways. In the first place, he had confidently expected that his old mistress would say something expressive of her satisfaction in finding herself under his charge on such a dark night as this. Again, he was surprised to hear that voice come out of the carriage. It did not belong to Miss Jane, nor, so far as he could judge, to any of her family. After a moment’s hesitation he closed the door, and then irresolutely mounted to his seat and drove slowly on. He had not proceeded a hundred yards before there dawned upon his mind a dim recognition of the voice which had come from the carriage. Drawing up his horses again, he quickly got down and opened the carriage door.

“Who in dar, anyhow?” he said, in a tone by no means as respectful as that he had used before.

At this question the opposite door of the carriage

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suddenly opened, and the occupant popped out of it. As this individual, upon reaching the ground, turned and stood facing Uncle Elijah, the latter could see, outlined upon a patch of sky behind him, the plainly discernible form of the cobbler Montague, from whose lips now burst forth a roar of laughter that completely established his identity. The outraged soul of Uncle Elijah boiled and bubbled within him. He put out his left arm as if he would reach through the carriage and clutch the scoundrel by the throat. But this was impossible, and he would not drop the reins to run around the carriage.

“You eberlastin’ fool cobbler!” he cried, “what fur you go play dis trick on me?”

“I no play no trick on you, Uncle ’Lijah,” returned Montague, still laughing immoderately. “You played de trick on youse’f. I’s done nuffin’ but jus’ kep’ outer yer way. I got up behin’ so’s ter see whar you was gwine, an’ den I unhooked de back cuttins an’ slipped inside ’cause ’twas moh comf’ble.”

“I’ll break your neck fur dat!” cried Uncle Elijah. “A low-down yaller shoemaker like you gittin’ inter Miss Jane’s kerridge!”

“Got ter ketch me fus’, Uncle ’Lijah, ’fore you break my neck,” replied the shoemaker, still in a merry mood.

“Shet up yer fool talk!” cried Elijah, “an’ tell me whar you was sent ter.”

“I was sent fur Miss Polly Brown, de seamstress wot libs on Colonel Tom Giles’s place. But dat was a long time back; she done gone ter bed afore dis. Miss Jane tole me ter go ’arly in de ebenin’, but somebody done took one ob de hoss-collus fur de plow team, an’

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I couldn't find it nowhar, so it got right smart late afore I started. An' now you done tuk up so much time, Uncle 'Lijah, comin' 'way out hyar on yer little business, dat 'tain't no use gwine fur Miss Polly Brown till de mawnin'. Whar *is* you gwine, anyhow, Uncle 'Lijah?"

To this Uncle Elijah made no answer, but his tone moderated a little as he asked : "Wot fur you tell me ter keep on ter de kyars?"

"'Cos I didn't know no udder place ter go, ef it was lef' ter me. 'Tain't fur ter de kyars now, an' dar's allus sumfin' dar fur de fam'ly, an' I'd ruther go back an' tell Miss Jane dat I done mistook whar she tole me ter go dan ter say I ain't been nowhar."

Uncle Elijah's mind was not a quick one, but it did not take a very long time for it to dawn upon him that in this predicament it might be better to go somewhere than nowhere. His anger had cooled down somewhat, for he felt that in his controversy with Montague he had had the worst of it. After rubbing the side of his head for a few moments he said shortly to the cobbler, "Shet dat doh, an' come 'long ter de kyars. Ef dar's anyt'ing dar fur de fam'ly, you kin git it, an' I'll drike back. Ain't gwine ter trus' you wid dese hosses in de night."

"Look hyar, Uncle 'Lijah," said Montague, coming round to the back of the carriage, but keeping well out of reach, "dar ain't gwine ter be no fightin' if I done git up 'longside o' you, is dar?"

"Come 'long hyar," said Uncle Elijah, mounting to his seat. "I ain't gwine ter fight while I got dese kerridge an' hosses under my chawge. But I don' say nuffin' 'bout ter-morrer mawnin', min' dat."

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“Don’ keer nuffin’ ‘bout mawnin’, long as ‘tain’t come,” said Montague, getting up on the other side.

The railroad station was a little beyond Dr. Marshall Gordon’s, and the road to it was one over which Elijah had gone so often that he felt warranted in driving at a good round pace, especially since he knew that his old mistress would not be bumped if he happened to strike a stone. His recollection of his previous careful driving made him grumble all the more at the shoemaker for having brought him on such a tomfool errand.

“Now look hyar, Uncle ‘Lijah,” said Montague, “did you eber hear de par’ble ob de fox an’ de mule?”

“Don’ ‘member no sich par’ble,” said Elijah. “Is it in de Scripter?”

“I reckin so,” said the shoemaker. “I neber read it dar myse’f, but I ‘spec’s it’s from de Scripter. Dar was a fox a-gwine ter de well fur a drink ob water, an’ when he got dar he pull up de rope, an’ sho’ ‘nuf dar wasn’t no bucket ter it. Dar had been a baptizin’ at a church not fur off, an’ as de baptizin’ pond was all dried up, some ob de bredren come ter de well ter git some water, an’ when dey saw dat de bucket was a good big one, dey t’ought dey mought as well take it ‘long ter baptize de sister right in it, ‘cos she was a little chile on’y free weeks ole.”

“Dey don’ dip ‘em dat young,” interrupted Elijah.

“Dis was a long time ago,” said Montague, “an’ a Mefodis’ baby at dat. An’ when de fox foun’ out de bucket was gone, he jus’ r’ared an’ chawged, fur he was pow’ful firstly, habin’ been eatin’ fur his breakfus’ some ob dat dar mean middlin’ dat dey sen’s up from Richmon’, wot is moh salt dan meat. But sw’arin’ wouldn’t

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fotch de water up ter him, an' so he 'cluded ter climb down de rope, an' git a drink dat way. When he got down dar, he drunk, an' he drunk, an' he drunk, an' when he felt mos' like fit ter bus' he thought he'd had enuf, an' he'd go up ag'in. But when dat ole fox try ter climb up de rope, he fin' it right smart diff'rent wuk from comin' down, an' he couldn't git up nohow. When he foun' dis out he was pow'ful disgruntled, fur he had to stan' in de water, an' it was mighty col', an' he 'spected he'd git de rheumatiz, an' have to have his legs wrop up in red flannel an' turpentine. While he was 'volvin' in his min' wot he'd do ter dat sto'keeper wot sol' him dat salt middlin', 'long come a army-mule an' look down de well. He was p'int-edly ole, dat mule, an' branded wid U. S. twice on bofe sides, wot had been guv ter a preacher at Pow'tan Co't-House by de gov'ment, in de place ob a good mule dat de Yankees tuk."

"Th' ain't no mention of Pow'tan Co't-House in de Scripter," interrupted Elijah.

"Don' know 'bout dat," said Montague. "I reckin it's a Scripter name. Anyhow, de army-mule he poke he head down de well an' holler : 'Hello ! Whar de bucket? an' who down dar?'" 'Mawnin', Cap'n Mule,' said de fox. He was one ob dem red foxes dat be'n hunt so offen by Gin'ral Tucker's pack of hounds dat it make him pow'ful peart. 'De bucket no 'count, cap'n. De bottom's bruck out, an' it's been throwed away. Eberybody comes down de well arfter de water ; an' I jus' tell you, cap'n, it's mighty good dis mawnin'. Somebody mus' 'a' drop a tickler an' a couple ob pounds ob sugar down hyar, fur it tas'es jus' like apple toddy.' An' de fox he 'gan ter lap wid

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he tongue as ef he could neber git enuf. When de army-mule he heared 'bout de apple toddy, he say no moh, but jus' slid down de rope. 'Hello!' he holler, when he git ter de bottom. 'How you put yer head down ter drink? Th' ain't no room fur me ter put my head down.' 'Dat's so,' said de fox, who was serougin' ag'in' de wall ter git out ob de way; 'you do fill up dis well 'mazin', an', sho' 'nuf, dar ain't no room fur you ter put yer head down. But neber you min'. Jus' stan' still, an' I'll fix all dat.' De army-mule his hin' legs was in de bottom ob de well, his fore legs was ag'in' de sides, an' he great long neck was stickin' eber so high up. Him gittin' right smart skeered 'bout dis time. De fox he jus' jump on de mule back, den on he neck, den on he head, an' den he gib one skip right out ob de well. 'Hello, dar!' hollered de mule. 'Whar you gwine? Come back hyar, an' haul me out dis well! What fur you go 'way an' leab me hyar?' De fox he come back, an' he look down de well, an' he say: 'Wot's de matter, mule?' An' de heart ob de mule went down inter his hoofs when he notus he done lef' off de 'cap'n.' 'I got nuffin' ter do wid dat well, nur wid you, nudder. Ef you wan' ter go down arfter apple toddy, dat's your lookout. Good mawnin'?' An' off went Mr. Fox ter de stoh po'ch ter tell de folks 'bout dat fool mule.

"Now dat par'ble 'minds me ob you, Uncle 'Lijah. You didn't hab ter git up on dis seat, an' hol' dese reins, an' drike dese hosses, ef you hadn't wanted ter. 'Tain't no use jawin' me fur dat."

"Ef I wasn't 'feared dese hosses 'u'd run away," roared Uncle Elijah, "I'd jus' take you down de road

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an' give you sech a hidin' as you haven't had sence you got inter breeches!"

With Uncle Elijah's hands so fully occupied as they were, Montague felt safe, and, edging as near as possible to his end of the seat, he exclaimed :

"But dat ain't all de par'ble, Uncle 'Lijah. De fox he come back dat ebenin', an' when he look down de well, dar de mule yit, sw'arin' an' cussin' like all outdohs. When he see de fox, de mule he 'clar ter gracious dat when he git out he kick dat fox inter little bits so small dat dey could sow him ober de fiel's from a wheat-seeder. 'Look hyar,' said de fox, 'you 'min' me ob de par'ble ob de man what los' his spring lamb. Somebody stole dat lamb wot he 'speeted ter git fooh dollars fur at de co't-house, an' de man he r'ared an' chawged, an' he swore dat ef he kotch dat t'ief he'd lick him wuss dan any sheep-t'ief wus eber licked in dat county, or any ob de 'j'inning counties. He hunted high, an' he hunted low, ter find de t'ief, an' jus' as he got inside de woods he come across a great big b'ar who had his spring lamb a-hung up a-barbequin', an' he was a-nailin' de skin up ag'in' a tree fur ter dry. De man was orful skeered, but de b'ar he sees him, an' he sing out: 'Hello, man! now you kotch de t'ief wot stole yer spring lamb, why you no punch he head? Why you no break he back wid dat club? Tell me dat, you big man!' An' de b'ar he put down he hammer an' he nails so's ter talk de better. De man he too skeered ter speak a word, an' he kep' squeezin' back, an' squeezin' back, widout sayin' nuffin'. De b'ar he come nigher an' nigher, an' he sing out: 'Wot fur you keep yer mouf shut like a

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can o' temahters? Why you no do some ob dem big t'ings you blow 'bout jus' now?' De man he squeeze back, an' he squeeze back, till he git ter de edge ob de woods, an' den he sing out: 'I mube dis meetin' 'journ!' An' he more'n 'journed.

"Now, Uncle 'Lijah, I don' wan' ter make no 'flections 'g'in' you in dis par'ble, but de fox he did say ter de mule dat 'fore he blow 'bout de big t'ings he gwine ter do, he better 'mune wid his own soul, an' see ef he able. Right smart fox dat, min' you, Uncle 'Lijah."

To this Uncle Elijah made no answer, but his eyes sparkled, his big hands were gripped very tightly on the whip and the reins that he held, and in a minute more he had drawn up at the little railroad station. Montague got down, and went to inquire if there were any packages of goods waiting for the Cloverfields family, while Elijah remained in his seat. This was a very familiar spot to the old negro. In former times he had been in the habit of driving here two or three times a week, and as he sat on his old seat on the carriage, with the same old reins in his hand, the two black horses of the olden time again before him, and the familiar scenes all about him, Elijah actually forgot, for the time being, that he had ever resigned his ancient post.

"Look hyar," said Montague, presently returning with a package in his hands. "Hyar's some dry-goods from Richmon', an' ef we hadn't druv down hyar, I'd been sent arfter 'em ter-morrer in de cart or on mule-back. De train's comin' in ten minutes. Might as well wait an' see ef dar's anythin' moh."

Elijah grumbled a little at waiting, but Montague, whose soul delighted in being stirred, even by so

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small a matter as the arrival of a railroad train, insisted that it would be unwise to go away when a few minutes' delay might save a lot of future trouble. And so they waited.

Soon there was heard a distant whistle, then an approaching rumble, and the train rolled up to the station and stopped. As she had always done, Gamma tossed her head and looked to one side, while Delta pricked up his ears. But, as he had always done, Uncle Elijah kept a firm hand upon the reins, and spoke to his horses in a low, quiet tone, which had the effect of making them understand that they might safely remain where they were, for under no circumstances would the train come their way.

Out of the open window of a car a young man put his head and looked up and down the narrow platform, and then his eye was caught by the Cloverfields carriage, standing full in the light of the station lamp. Drawing in his head, he continued to look steadily at the carriage, and then he arose and came out on the car platform. One of the good, comfortable stops, not unfrequent on the roads in that part of the country, was taking place, and the conductor had gone into the station to send a telegram. The young man came down to the bottom step, and again looked up and down. Here he was espied by Montague, who rushed up and accosted him :

“How d’ye, Mahs Chawles? Don’ you ‘member me? I’se Montague Braxton. Use’ ter men’ yer boots.”

“Isn’t that Uncle Elijah?” asked the young man.
“And who is the carriage waiting for?”

“Come fur you, sah,” said the mendacious cobbler.

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“All ready waitin’, sah. Gimme your checks, Mahs Chawles, an’ I’ll git de baggage.”

“Come for me!” repeated the young man. “How did they know?”

“Cawn’t tell nuffin’ ‘bout dat, sah, but Miss Jane she sen’ me an’ ‘Lijah arfter you wid de kerridge. Better hurry up wid de checks, sah.”

The young man stood upon the bottom step, looking steadily at the carriage, and paying no attention to Montague’s last remark. Then he moved his eyes and saw the conductor coming out of the station. He turned, sprang up the steps and into the car, returning almost instantly with a valise and a light overcoat, which were immediately taken by the obsequious Montague.

“Dat all, sah?” said he.

The young man nodded. “All aboard!” cried the conductor. And in a moment the train had moved away.

Montague put the coat and valise on the front seat of the carriage, and stood holding open the door. “Hyar Mahs Chawles,” said he to Elijah.

The old man turned so suddenly as to startle the horses. “Mahs Chawles!” he exclaimed, his eyes opening like a pair of head-lights.

“How d’ye, Uncle Elijah?” said the young man, extending his hand, which the old negro took as if he had been in a dream.

Montague looked a little anxiously at the two. “Better hurry up, sah,” he said in a low voice. “It’s gittin’ late, an’ Miss Jane’s awful skeery ‘bout dribin’ at night.”

At this the young man entered the carriage, Mon-

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tague shut the door and ran around to his seat, and Uncle Elijah, his mind dazed and confused by this series of backward slides into times gone by, turned his horses and drove away. For ten minutes he spoke not a word, and then he said to Montague : "Did you know Mahs Chawles was comin'?"

"Ob course I did," said the cobbler. "You don' s'pose, Uncle 'Lijah, dat I'd fotch you all de way down hyar jus' fur a little bun'le ob cotton cloth? Didn't say nuffin' 'bout Mahs Chawles, 'cos I feared he mightn't come, an' you'd be dis'p'nted; an' dem par'bles was jus' ter pahs de time, Uncle 'Lijah—jus' ter pahs de time."

The old man made no answer, but drove steadily on, and the moon now having arisen, he was able to make very good time. Little more was said until they had nearly reached Uncle Elijah's cabin; then Montague asked the old man if he intended driving all the way to Cloverfields.

"Ob course I do," was the gruff reply. "You don' s'pose I'd trus' you wid Mahs Chawles dis time o' night?"

"Well, den," said the other, "I reckin I'll git down an' cut acrost de fiel's ter my cabin, ef you'll be 'bligin' enuf, Uncle 'Lijah, jus' ter put up de hosses when you gits dar, an' I'll come fus' t'ing in de mawnin' an' 'tend to eberyting, jus' as I allus does."

"Go 'long," said Elijah, slackening his horses' pace. "I's got no use fur you, nohow."

The mistress of Cloverfields, with "little" Miss Jane and Miss Almira Gay, was sitting in the parlor of the old mansion, very much disturbed. In the middle of the afternoon Montague Braxton had been told to

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take the carriage and go for Miss Polly Brown, the seamstress, who had promised to give a week of her valuable time to Cloverfields. But although it was now between nine and ten o'clock, he had not returned. The force of men-servants at Cloverfields was very small, and no one of them lived at the house, excepting a very old man, too decrepit to send out to look up the lost cobbler and a carriage ; and "Miss Jane," who was still a vigorous woman, though her hair was white, with her daughter, little Miss Jane, and her niece, Miss Almira Gay, had almost determined that they would walk over to a cabin about half a mile distant, and get a colored man living there to saddle a mule and ride to Miss Polly Brown's to see what had happened, when their deliberations were cut short by the sound of carriage wheels on the drive. The three ladies sprang to their feet and hurried out to the porch, throwing the front door wide open, that the light from the hall lamp might illumine the steps.

"Why, Miss Polly !" exclaimed little Miss Jane, "what on earth—" And then she abruptly stopped, ejaculating in a low tone : "Uncle Elijah !"

At these words her mother moved quickly forward to the edge of the porch ; but before she had time to say anything the carriage door opened, and there stepped out, not the middle-aged seamstress who was expected, but a young man, on whose pale and upturned face the light of the hall lamp shone full. There was a cry from the women, a sudden bound up the steps, and in an instant the son of the house was in his mother's arms, with his sister clasping as much of his neck as she could reach.

A quarter of an hour after this, as Master Charles

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sat in the parlor, his mother on one side with an arm around him, his sister on the other side with her arm around him, while his right hand clasped that of Miss Almira Gay, he thus explained himself: "I hadn't the least idea of getting off the train, for you know I had vowed never to come here till there was an end of that old trouble, but I thought if I went down to Danville in the late train we probably wouldn't stop at our station at all, and that I wouldn't notice when we passed it. But we did stop, and I couldn't help looking out, and when I saw the Cloverfields carriage standing there just as natural as life, and old Uncle Elijah in the driver's seat—"

"Uncle Elijah!" exclaimed his mother, pushing back her chair. "Did he go down to the station to bring me my son?"

"It was Elijah!" cried little Miss Jane. "I saw him on the seat."

The old lady arose and left the room. She stepped upon the porch and looked out, but the carriage had gone. Then she went to the back door, hastily lighted a lantern which stood on the table, and, with this in her hand, made her way under the tall oaks and along the driveway to the barn, which was at some distance from the house. Through the open door of the stables she saw dimly the form of a man engaged in rubbing down a horse. Raising the lantern in her hand, she stepped to the door and threw the light within.

"Uncle Elijah," she said, "is that you?"

The man turned around. He forgot he had a vote, he forgot he could serve on a jury. He simply took off his hat, and coming forward, said: "Yaas, Miss Jane, dis is me."

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The next morning, not very early, the cobbler approached the Cloverfields stables to attend to the horses, and to do the various oddments and bitments of work for which he had been temporarily hired. To his surprise, just as he turned a corner of the barn he met Uncle Elijah, who was engaged in attaching a new lash to the carriage whip. Montague, astounded, stood for a moment speechless, gazing at Elijah, who, in some way, seemed to be different from what he was the day before. He looked taller and wider, his countenance was bright, his general aspect cheerful, and an element of Sunday seemed to have been infused into his clothes.

"Didn't 'spec' ter see you hyar, Uncle 'Lijah," stammered the cobbler, when he found his voice.

"Reckin not," said the old man, "but I's glad ter see you, 'cos I wants ter tell you a par'ble. Dar was once a mud-turkle, de low-downest, orneriest, no'-countest mud-turkle in de whole worl'. His back was so cracked dat it wouldn't keep de rain off he skin, an' he bottom shell been ha'f-sole' free or foh times; he so lazy he ruther scuffle it ober de rocks dan walk, an' de chickens had eat off he tail afore de war, 'cos he too triflin' ter pull it in. Well, dis mis'ble mud-turkle come 'long one day, an' he sees a Chris'mus tukkey a-settin' on de limb ob a big apple-tree. De tukkey he feel fus'-rate, an' he look fus'-rate, an' he 'j'yin' hese'f up dar 'mong de leabes an' de apples. De mud-turkle he look up, an' he say: 'Dat mighty nice up dar! Reckin I'd like ter set up dar myse'f. Jus' you come down, Mahs Chris'mus Tukkey, an' lemme set up dar 'mongst de apples an' de leabes.' Den de Chris'mus tukkey he bristle

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hese'f up, an' he stick out he feathers, an' he spread out he tail, an' his comb an' his gills git redder dan fire, an' he sing out : 'Go 'long wid you, you mud-turkle ; don' lemme heah you say no moh 'bout settin' up hyar. You dunno how ter drike a hoss. You got no moh sense dan ter chain de hin' wheel ob a kerridge gwine down Red Hill. You lose de hoss-collus, you breaks de whip-lashes, an' gits de harness all upside down wrong, an' you comes ter feed de hosses arfter dey's been watered an' turned out moh'n two hours. P'r'aps you dunno who I is. I's de drier ob de Cloverfields kerridge, an' as long as I has de use ob my j'ints, an' can see wid my eyes, nobody dries dat kerridge but me.' An' now, look hyar, you shoemaker mud-turkle : when me, an' Miss Jane, an' little Miss Jane, an' Miss Almira Gay, an' p'r'aps Mahs Chawles, gits ter de happy lan', don' you reckin dat you's gwine ter come dar too 'cos yer foolin' helped fotch Mahs Chawles home. De angel Gabr'el he p'int his horn right at you an' he sing out : 'Ain't got no use fur no yaller cobbler angels hyar, wid dey fool par'bles, an' dey lies 'bout bein' sent fur Mahs Chawles, an' dey lettin' Aun' M'riar split her own wood an' fotch her own water from de spring.' An' now you's got my par'ble, Montague Braxton, an' de nex' time you comes you gits yer lickin'."

A STORY OF ASSISTED FATE

A STORY OF ASSISTED FATE

I

IN a general way I am not a superstitious man, but I have a few ideas, or notions, in regard to fatality and kindred subjects, of which I have never been able entirely to dispossess my mind, nor can I say that I have ever tried very much to do so, for I hold that a certain amount of irrationalism in the nature of a man is a thing to be desired. By its aid he clambers over the wall which limits the action of his intellect, and if he be but sure that he can get back again no harm may come of it, while he is the better for many pleasant excursions.

My principal superstitious notion, and indeed the only one of importance, is the belief that whatever I earnestly desire and plan for will happen. This idea does not relate to things for which people fight hard or work long, but to those events for which we sit down and wait. It is truly a pleasant belief, and one worthy to be fostered, if there can be found any ground for it. I do not exercise my little superstition very often, but when I do I find things happen as I wish ; and in cases where this has not yet occurred there is plenty of time to wait.

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I am not a very old person, being now in my twenty-eighth year ; but my two sisters, who live with me, as well as most of my acquaintances, look upon me, I think, as an older man. This is due, not to my experience in the world, for I have not gone out a great deal among my fellow-men, but rather to my habits of reading and reflection, which have so matured my intellectual nature that the rest of me, so to speak, has insensibly stepped a little faster to keep pace with it. Grace Anna, indeed, is two years older than I, yet I know she looks up to me as a senior quite as much as does Bertha, who is but twenty-four.

These sisters had often laughingly assured me that the one thing I needed was a wife, and although I never spoke much on the subject, in the course of time I began to think a good deal about it, and the matter so interested my mind that at last I did a very singular thing : I keep a diary, in which I briefly note daily events, especially those which may, in a degree, be considered as epochs. My book has a page for every day, with the date printed at the top thereof—not a very desirable form, perhaps, for those who would write much on one day and very little the next, but it suits me well enough, for I seldom enter into details. Not many months ago, as I sat alone, one evening, in my library, turning over the leaves of this diary, I looked ahead at the pages intended for the days of the year that were yet to come, and the thought entered my mind that it was a slavish thing to be able to note only what had happened, and not to dare to write one word upon the blank pages of the next month, or the next week, or even of to-morrow. As I turned backward and forward

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these pages devoted to a record of the future, the desire came to me to write something upon one of them. It was a foolish fancy, perhaps, but it pleased me. I would like a diary not only of what had been, but of what was to be. I longed to challenge fate, and I did it. I selected a page in a good time of the year,—it was September fourteenth,—and on it I wrote :

“ This day there came into my life the woman who is to be my wife.”

When I had made this strange entry I regarded it with satisfaction. I had fully come to the conclusion that it was due to my position as the owner of a goodly estate that I should marry. I had felt that at some time I must do something in this matter. And now a thing was done, and a time was fixed. It is true that I knew no woman who was at all likely, upon the day I had selected, or upon any other day, to exercise a matrimonial influence upon my life. But that made no difference to me. I had taken my fate into my own hands, and I would now see what would happen.

It was then early in July, and in a little more than two months the day which I had made a very momentous one to me would arrive. I cannot say that I had a positive belief that what I had written would occur on the fourteenth of September, but I had a very strange notion that, as there was no reason why it should not be so, it would be so. At any rate, who could say it would not be so? This sort of thing was not a belief, but to all intents and purposes it was just as good.

It was somewhat amusing even to myself, and it

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would probably have been very amusing to any one else acquainted with the circumstances, to observe the influence that this foundationless and utterly irrational expectation had upon me. To the great delight of my sisters, I began to attend to matters in which formerly I had taken little interest. I set two men at work upon the grounds about the house, giving my personal supervision to the removal of the patches of grass in the driveway which led under the oaks to the door. Here and there I had a panel of fence put in better order, and a dead apple-tree, which for some time had stood on the brow of a hill in view of the house, was cut down and taken away.

“If any of our friends think of visiting us,” said Bertha, “they ought to come now, while everything is looking so trim and nice.”

“Would you like that?” asked Grace Anna, looking at me.

“Yes,” I replied. “That is, they might begin to come now.”

At this both my sisters laughed.

“Begin to come!” cried Bertha. “How hospitable you are growing!”

The summer went on, and I kept good faith with my little superstition. If either of us should desert the other, it should not be I who would do it. It pleased me to look forward to the event which I had called up out of the future, and to wait for it—if perchance it should come.

One morning my sister Bertha entered my library with a letter in her hand and a very pleasant expression on her face. “What do you think?” she said. “We are going to have a visit!—just as the paint is

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dry on the back porch, so that we can have tea there in the afternoon."

"A visit!" I exclaimed, regarding her with much interest.

"Yes," continued Bertha. "Kitty Watridge is coming to stay with us. I have written and written to her, and now she is coming."

"Who is she?" I asked.

Bertha laughed. "You haven't forgotten the Watridges, have you?"

No, I had not forgotten them—at least, the only one of them I ever knew. Old Mr. Watridge had been a friend of my late father, a cheerful and rather ruddy man, although much given to books. He had been my friend, too, in the days when he used to come to us. And I remember well that it was he who started me on a journey along the third shelf from the top, on the east wall of the library, through "The World Displayed," in many volumes, by Smart, Goldsmith, and Johnson, and thence to some "New Observations on Italy," in French, by two Swedish gentlemen, in 1758; and so on through many other works of the kind, where I found the countries shown forth on their quaint pages so different from those of the same name described in modern books of travel that it was to me a virtual enlargement of the world. It had been a long time since I had seen the old gentleman, and I felt sorry for it.

"Is Mr. Watridge coming?" I asked.

"Of course not," said Bertha. "That would be your affair. And besides, he never leaves home now. It is only Kitty, his youngest daughter—my friend."

I had an indistinct recollection that Mr. Watridge

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had some children, and that they were daughters, but that was all I remembered about them. "She is grown?" I asked.

"I should think so," answered Bertha, with a laugh. "She is at least twenty."

If my sister could have known the intense interest which suddenly sprung up within me she would have been astounded. A grown-up, marriageable young lady was coming to my house, in September! My next question was asked hurriedly: "When will she be here?"

"She is coming next Wednesday, the sixteenth," answered Bertha, referring to her letter.

"The sixteenth!" I said to myself. "That is two days after my date."

"What kind of a lady is she?" I asked Bertha.

"She is lovely—just as lovely as she can be."

I now began to feel a little disappointed. If she were lovely, as my sister said, and twenty, with good Watridge blood, why did she not come a little sooner? It was truly an odd thing to do, but I could not forbear expressing what I thought. "I wish," I said somewhat abstractedly, "she were coming on Monday instead of Wednesday."

Bertha laughed heartily. "I was really afraid," she said, "that you might think there were enough girls already in the house. But here you are wanting Kitty to come before she is ready. Grace Anna!" she cried to my elder sister, who was passing the open door, "he isn't put out a bit, and he is in such a hurry to see Kitty that he thinks she should come on Monday."

It was impossible to chide my sisters for laughing

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at me, and I could not help smiling myself. "It is not that I am in a hurry to see her," I observed, "for I do not know the young lady at all, but I consider Monday a more suitable day than Wednesday for her arrival."

"It is odd," replied Bertha, "that you should prefer one day to another."

"Is there any reason why it does not suit you to have her come on Wednesday?" asked Grace Anna. "Her visit might be deferred a day or two."

Of course I could give no reason, and I did not wish the visit deferred.

"It's just because he's so dreadfully systematic!" cried Bertha. "He thinks everything ought to begin at the beginning of the week, and that even a visit should make a fair start on Monday, and not break in unmethodically."

My elder sister was always very considerate of my welfare and my wishes, and had it been practicable I believe that she would have endeavored in this instance to make our hospitality conform to what appeared to be my love of system and order. But she explained to me that, apart from the awkwardness of asking the young lady to change the day which she had herself fixed, without being able to give any good reason therefor, it would be extremely inconvenient for them to have their visitor before Wednesday, as an earlier arrival would materially interfere with certain household arrangements.

I said no more, but I was disappointed. And this feeling grew upon me, for the reason that during the rest of the day and the evening my sisters talked a great deal about their young friend, and I found that,

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unless they were indeed most prejudiced judges,—which, in the case of Grace Anna at least, I could never believe,—this young person who was coming to us must be possessed of most admirable personal qualities. She was pretty ; she had excellent moral sentiments, a well-cultured intellect, and a lovable disposition. These, with the good blood,—which, in my opinion, was a most important requisite,—made up a woman in every way fitted to enter my life in a matrimonial capacity. If, without any personal bias, I had been selecting a wife for a friend, I could not have expected to do better than this. That such a young person should come within the range of my cognizance on the wrong day would be, to say the least, a most annoying occurrence. Why had I not selected the sixteenth, or she the fourteenth ? A fate that was two days slow might as well be no fate at all. My meeting with the girl would have no meaning. I must admit that the more I thought about this girl the more I wished it should have a meaning.

During the night, or perhaps very early in the morning, a most felicitous idea came into my mind. I would assist my fate. My idea was this : On Monday I would drive to Mr. Watridge's house. It was a pleasant day's journey. I would spend Tuesday with him, and, returning on Wednesday, I could bring Miss Kitty with me. Thus all the necessary conditions would be fulfilled. She would come into my life on the fourteenth, and I would have opportunities of knowing her which probably would not occur to me at home. Everything would happen as it should, only, instead of the lady coming to me, I should go to her.

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As I expected, my project, when I announced it at the breakfast-table, was the occasion of much mirth, especially on the part of Bertha. "I never saw anything like it!" she cried. "You want to see Kitty even more than I do. I should never have thought of such a thing as going for her two days in advance."

"As it would have been impossible for you to do so," said I, "I can easily conceive that you would not have allowed the idea to enter your mind."

Grace Anna, however, looked upon my plan with much favor, and entered into its details with interest, dwelling particularly on the pleasure Mr. Watridge would derive from my visit.

I looked forward with great pleasure to the little journey I was about to make. The distance from Eastover, my residence, to Mr. Watridge's house was some twenty-five miles—a very suitable day's drive in fine weather. The road led through a pleasant country, with several opportunities for pretty views, and about half-way was a neat tavern, standing behind an immense cherry-tree, where a stop could be made for rest and for a midday meal. I had a comfortable, easy-cushioned buggy, well provided with protective appurtenances in case of rain or too much sunshine; and my sisters and myself were of the opinion that, under ordinary circumstances, no one would hesitate between this vehicle and the crowded stage-coach, which was the only means of communication between our part of the country and that in which the Watridge estate lay.

I made an early start on Monday morning, with my good horse, Dom Pedro—named by my sister Bertha, but whether for the Emperor of Brazil, or for a social

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game of cards which we generally played when we had two or three visitors and were too many for whist, I do not know. I arrived at my destination toward the close of the afternoon, and old Mr. Watridge was delighted to see me. We spent a pleasant hour in his library, waiting for the return of his two daughters, who were out for a walk. It must be admitted that it was with considerable emotional perturbation that I beheld the entrance into that room of Miss Kitty Watridge. She came in alone, her sister, who was much older, being detained by some household duties, connected, probably, with my unexpected arrival. This, with the action of Mr. Watridge in presently excusing himself for a time, gave me an opportunity, more immediate than I had expected, for an uninterrupted study of this young lady, who had become to me so important a person.

I will not describe Kitty, her appearance, nor her conversation, but will merely remark that before we were joined by her father and sister I would have been quite willing, so far as I was concerned, to show her the entry in my diary.

It may be that a man heavily clad with the armor of reserve and restraint sinks more quickly and deeper than one not so encumbered, when he finds himself suddenly in a current of that sentiment which now possessed me. Be that as it may, my determination was arrived at before I slept that night: Kitty Watridge had entered into my life on the fourteenth of September, and I was willing to accept her as my wife.

As the son of an old comrade on the part of the father, and as the brother of two dear friends on the

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part of the daughters, I was treated with hearty cordiality by the family, and the next day was a most pleasing and even delightful one to me, until the evening came. Then a cloud, and a very heavy one, arose upon my emotional horizon. I had stated how I purposed to make the little journey of Miss Kitty to our house more comfortable and expeditious than it would otherwise be, and Mr. Watridge had expressed himself very much pleased with the plan, while Kitty had declared that it would be charming, especially when compared with travel by stage-coach, of which the principal features, in her idea of it, appeared to be mothers, little children, and lunch-baskets. But, after dinner, Miss Maria, the elder daughter, remarked very quietly, but very positively, that she did not think it would do—that is the phrase she used—for me to drive her sister to Eastover. She gave no reasons, and I asked none, but it was quite evident that her decision was one not to be altered.

“It would be far better,” she said, “not to change our original plan, and for Kitty, as well as her trunk, to go by the stage. Mrs. Karcroft is going the whole of the way, and Kitty will be well taken care of.”

Miss Maria was the head of the house; she had acted for many years as the maternal director of her sister; and I saw very soon that what the other two members of the family might think upon the subject would matter very little. The father, indeed, made at first some very vigorous dissent, urging that it would be a shame to make me take that long drive home alone, when I had expected company. And although Kitty said nothing, I am sure she looked quite disappointed. But neither words nor looks availed

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anything. Miss Maria was placid, but very firm, and under her deft management of the conversation the subject was soon dismissed as settled.

“I am very sorry,” observed the old gentleman to me, when the ladies had bidden us good night, “that Kitty cannot take advantage of your invitation, which was a very kind one, and to which I see not the slightest objection. My daughter Maria has very peculiar ideas sometimes, but as she acts as a sort of mother here we don’t like to interfere with her.”

“I would not have you do so for the world,” answered I.

“You are very good, very good!” exclaimed Mr. Watridge, “and I must say I think it’s a confounded shame that you and Kitty cannot take that pleasant drive together. Suppose you go with her in the stage, and let me send a man to Eastover with your horse and vehicle.”

“I thank you very kindly, sir,” I replied, “but it will be better for me to return the way I came. Your daughter will have a companion, I understand.”

“Nobody but old Mrs. Karcroft, and she counts for nothing as company. You would better think of it.”

I would not consent, however, to make any change in my arrangements, and, shortly after, I retired.

I went to bed that night a very angry man. When I prepared a plan or scheme with which no reasonable fault could be found, I was not accustomed to having it thwarted, or indeed even objected to. I was displeased with Mr. Watridge because he allowed himself to be so easily influenced, and I was even dissatisfied with Kitty’s want of spirit, though, of course, she could not have been expected to exhibit an eager-

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ness to accompany me. But with that horrible old maid Miss Maria I was truly indignant. There frequently arises in the mind an image which forcibly connects itself with the good or bad qualities of a person under our contemplation, and thus Miss Maria appeared to me in the character of a moral pepper-box. Virtue is like sugar or cream—good in itself, and of advantage to that with which it is suitably mingled. But Miss Maria's propriety was the hottest and most violent sort of pepper, extremely disagreeable in itself, and never needed except in the case of weak moral digestion.

I went to sleep thinking of a little pepper-cruet which I would like to have made of silver for my table, to take the place of the owl or other conventional pattern, which should be exactly like Miss Maria—hard and unimpressionable without, hollow within, and the top of its head perforated with little holes. At breakfast I endeavored to be coldly polite, but it must have been easy for the family to perceive that I was very much offended. I requested that my horse and buggy should be made ready as soon as possible. While I was waiting for it on the porch, where Mr. Watridge had just left me, Miss Kitty came out to me. This was the first time I had been alone with her since the preceding afternoon, when we had had a most charming walk through the orchard and over the hills to a high point, where we had stayed until we saw the sun go down.

"It seems a real pity," she observed very prettily, and in a tone which touched me, "that you should be driving off now by yourself, while in about an hour I shall start from the same place."

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"Miss Kitty," said I, "would you like to go with me?"

She hesitated for a moment, looked down, and then looked up, and said, "So far as I am concerned, I think—I mean I know—that I should like very much to go with you. But you see—" And then she hesitated again.

"Say no more, I pray you!" I exclaimed. I would not place her in the unpleasant position of defending, or even explaining, the unwarrantable interference of a relative. "If you really wish to accompany me," I continued, warmly shaking her hand, for my buggy was now approaching, "I am entirely satisfied, and nothing more need be said. It is, in a measure, the same as though you were going with me. Good-by."

A moment before I had been depressed and morose. Now I was exuberantly joyful. The change was sudden, but there was reason for it. Kitty wished to go with me, and had come to tell me so!

Mr. Watridge and his elder daughter now appeared in the doorway, and as I took leave of the latter I am sure she noticed a change in my manner. I said no more to her than was absolutely necessary, but the sudden cheerfulness which had taken possession of me could not be repressed even in her presence.

The old gentleman accompanied me to the carriage block. "I don't want to bore you about it," he said, "but I really am sorry you are going away alone."

I felt quite sure, from several things Mr. Watridge had said and done during my visit, that he would be well pleased to see his younger daughter and myself thrown very much into the company of each other, and to have us remain so, indeed, for the rest of our

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lives. And there was no reason why he should not desire it. In every way the conditions of such a union would be most favorable.

“Thank you very much,” I returned, “but the pleasure of having your daughter at my house will make me forget this little disappointment.”

He looked at me with glistening eyes. Had I boldly asked him, “Will you be my father-in-law?” no more favorable answer could have come from his lips than I now saw upon his countenance.

“Good fortune be with you!” were his last words, as I drove away.

I do not suppose anything of the kind could be more delightful than my drive that morning. Miss Kitty had said that she would like to be my companion, and I determined to have her so in imagination, if not in fact. The pleasures of fancy are sometimes more satisfactory than those of reality, for we have them entirely under our control. I chose now to imagine that Miss Kitty was seated by my side, and I sat well to the right, that I might give her plenty of room. In imagination I conversed with her, and she answered me as I would have her. Our remarks were carefully graduated to the duration of our acquaintance and the seemly progress of our intimacy.

I wished to discover the intellectual status of the fair young creature who had come into my life on the fourteenth of September. I spoke to her of books, and found that her reading had been varied and judicious. She had read Farrar’s “Life of Christ,” but did not altogether like it, and while she had much enjoyed Froude’s “Cæsar,” she could have wished to believe the author as just as he endeavored to make

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his hero appear. With modern romance she had dealt but lightly, rather preferring works of history and travel, even when pervaded with the flavor of the eighteenth century. But we did not always speak of abstract subjects. We were both susceptible to the influences of nature, and my companion enjoyed as much as I did the bright sunshine tempered by a cooling breeze, the clear sky with fair white clouds floating along the horizon, and the occasional views of the blue and distant mountains, their tops suffused with warm autumnal mists. After a time I asked her if I might call her Kitty, and glancing downward, and then up, with the same look she had given me on the porch, she said I might. This was not, in my opinion, an undue familiarity, which feature I was very careful to eliminate from our companionship.

There was one act, however, of what might be termed super-friendly kindness, which I intended to propose, and the contemplation of its probable acceptance afforded me much pleasure. After our quiet luncheon in the shaded little dining-room of the Cherry-tree Inn, and when she had rested as long as she chose, we would begin our afternoon journey, and the road, before very long, would lead us through a great pine wood. Here, rolling over the hard, smooth way, and breathing the gentle odor of the pines, she would naturally feel a little somnolent, and I intended to say to her that, if she liked, she might rest her head upon my shoulder and doze. If I should hear the sound of approaching wheels I would gently arouse her. But as an interruption of this kind was not likely to occur, I thought with much satisfaction of the pleasure I should have in the afternoon, when this

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fancy would be appropriate. To look upon the little head gently resting on that shoulder, which, when our acquaintance had more fully developed, I would offer her as a permanent possession, would be to me a pre-connubial satisfaction of a very high order.

When about a mile from the Cherry-tree Inn, and with my mind filled with these agreeable fancies, an accident happened to me. One of the irons which connected the shafts to the front axle broke, and the conditions of my progress became abruptly changed. The wheel at that end of the axle to which a shaft was yet attached went suddenly forward, and the other flew back and grated against the side of the buggy, while both wheels, instead of rolling in the general course of the vehicle, were dragged in a sidewise direction. The disconnected shaft fell upon the legs of Dom Pedro, who, startled by the unusual sensation, forsook his steady trot and broke into a run. Thus, with the front wheels scraping the road, the horse attached by but a single shaft, I was hurried along at an alarming pace. Pull as I might, I could not check the progress of Dom Pedro. And if this state of affairs had continued for more than the few moments which it really lasted, the front wheels would have been shattered, and I do not know what sad results might have ensued. But the other shaft broke loose, the reins were rudely torn from my hands, and the horse, now free from attachment to the vehicle, went clattering along the road, the shafts bobbing at his heels, while the buggy, following the guidance of the twisted front axle, ran into a shallow ditch at the side of the road, and abruptly stopped.

Unhurt, I sprang out, and my first thought was one

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of joy that the Kitty who had been by my side was an imaginary one. Had the real Kitty been there, what might not have happened to her! A dozen possible accidents crowded themselves on my mind, and I have no doubt my countenance expressed my feelings.

There was nothing to be done but to take my valise and the whip from the buggy, and walk on to the inn, where I found the landlord in the act of saddling a horse, to come and see what had happened. Dom Pedro had arrived with a portion of the shafts attached to him, the rest having been kicked away. The accident occasioned considerable stir at the inn, but as I never care to discuss my personal affairs any further than is necessary, it was soon arranged that after I had lunched I should borrow a saddle from the landlord, and ride Dom Pedro home, while the broken buggy would be brought to the inn, where I would send for it the next day. This plan did not please me, for I was not fond of equestrianism, and Dom Pedro was rather a hard trotter. But there was nothing better to do. Had I not taken this road, which was much more agreeable although rather longer than the highroad, I might have been picked up by the stage which was conveying Miss Kitty to my house.

While I was yet at my meal there arrived at the inn a young man, who shortly afterwards entered the room and informed me that, having heard of my accident, he came to offer me a seat in the buggy in which he was travelling. He was going my way, and would be glad of a companion. This invitation, given as it was by a well-appearing young man of pleasing manners, was, after a little consideration, accepted by

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me. I would much prefer to ride a dozen miles in a buggy with a stranger than on horseback alone.

The drive of the afternoon was very different from what I had expected it to be, but it was not devoid of some pleasant features. My companion was sociable, and not too communicative, although he annoyed me very much by giving me the entirely uncalled-for information that if I had had short straps from the ends of the shafts to the axle, which no well-ordered buggy should be without, the accident would not have occurred. I passed this by, and our conversation became more general and, to me, more acceptable. The young man was going to Harnden, a village not far from my house, where he appeared to have some business, and he assured me that he would not object in the least to go a little out of his way and set me down at my door.

We reached Eastover quite late in the afternoon, and I perceived, from the group on the porch, that Miss Kitty had arrived. All three of the ladies came down to meet me, evidently very much surprised to see me in a strange vehicle. When I alighted, and while I was hastily explaining to my sisters the cause of this change of conveyance, I was surprised to see Miss Kitty shaking hands with the young man, who was standing by his horse's head. My elder sister, Grace Anna, who had also noticed this meeting, now approached the pair, and was introduced to the gentleman. In a few moments she returned to me, who had been regarding the interview with silent amazement.

"It is Harvey Glade," she said, "Kitty's cousin. We should invite him to stay here to-night."

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I cannot conceive of anything which more quickly than these words would have snuffed out the light which had illumined the vision of my house with Kitty in it. But it was impossible for me to forget that I was a gentleman and the master of Eastover, and instantly causing my perception of these facts to take precedence of my gathering emotions, I stepped up to Miss Kitty, and asking to be introduced to her cousin, I begged him to make my house his home during his stay in the neighborhood.

This invitation was accepted, as I supposed it would be when I made it, yet I must own that I did not expect Mr. Glade to remain at my house for a week. Of course his presence prevented the execution of any of my plans regarding the promotion of my intimacy with Kitty. But although the interruption caused me much vexation, I maintained the equanimity due to my position, and hoped each day that the young man would take his leave. Toward the end of his visit I became aware, through the medium of my sisters, to whom I had left in a great degree the entertainment of our guests, that young Glade was actually engaged to be married to Kitty. She had told them so herself. This statement, which chilled to the verge of frigidity my every sensibility, was amplified as follows: The young people had been attached to each other for some time, but the visits of Glade having been discouraged by Miss Kitty's family, they had not seen each other lately, and there had been no positive declaration of amatory sentiment on the part of either. But this protracted sojourn in my house had given the young man all the opportunity he could desire, and the matter was settled so definitely that there

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was no reason to suppose that the better judgment of her elders would cause the young woman to change her mind.

Here was a fine ending to my endeavors to assist my fate. Instead of so doing, I had assisted the fate of Mr. Harvey Glade, in whose welfare I had no interest whatever. He had not known that Miss Kitty was coming to my house. He had not even been aware, until he met her at Eastover, that I was acquainted with her family. Had it not been for my endeavors to promote my own fortune in the direction of the lady, he would have had no opportunity to make her his own, and they probably would not have seen each other again, unless he had happened to call upon her as the mistress of Eastover. Instead of aiding Miss Kitty to enter my life on the fourteenth of September, I had ushered her into his life on the sixteenth of that month.

For a week after the departure of our guests—the young man went first—I found myself in a state of mental depression from which the kindly efforts of my sisters could not arouse me. Not only was I deeply chagrined at what had occurred, but it wounded my self-respect to think that my fate, which had been satisfactorily pursuing the course I had marked out for it, should have been thus suddenly and disastrously turned aside. I felt that I must confess myself conquered. It was an unusual and a difficult thing for me to do this, but there was no help for it. I took out my diary, and turned to the page whereon I had challenged fate. That entry must be erased. I must humble myself, and acknowledge it untrue.

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At the moment that I dipped the pen in the ink-stand there was a knock at the door, and Grace Anna entered.

"I have just had a letter," she said, "from dear Jane Wiltby, who married your old schoolfellow, Dr. Tom. I thought you would like to hear the news it contains. They have a little girl, and she is to be named for me."

"How old is it?" I asked, with indifferent interest.

"She was born on the fourteenth of September," said Grace Anna.

I sat erect, and looked at my sister—looked at her without seeing her. Thoughts, like clouds upon the horizon brightened by the rays of dawn, piled themselves up in my mind. Dr. Tom, the companion of my youth, ever my cherished friend! Jane, woman above women! Grace Anna!

I laid down the pen, and, leaving the momentous and prognostic entry just as I had written it, I closed my diary and placed it in my desk.

He who cannot adapt himself to the vagaries of a desired fate, who cannot place himself upon the road by which he expects it to come, and who cannot wait for it with cheerful confidence, is not worthy to be an assistant arbiter of his destiny.

II

THE fact that on the day indicated in my diary a young creature not only came into my life, but into her own, greatly satisfied and encouraged me. I would begin at the beginning. Within the sphere of

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my immediate cognizance would grow and develop the infant, the child, the girl, the woman, and, finally, the wife. What influence might I not have upon this development! The parents were my friends, the child was my selected bride. The possibilities of advantageous guidance, unseen perhaps, but potent to a degree unattainable by a mere parent or guardian, were, to my thinking, boundless.

I was now more content than I had been in the case of the young lady whom I had supposed had been given me by fate, but who, it now appeared, very fortunately, had been snatched away before my irrevocable mistake had been made. I was very grateful for this. I was grateful to fate, I was grateful to Mr. Glade, the successful lover, I was grateful even to Kitty for not having allowed herself to be influenced by anything she may have seen in me during our short acquaintance. Of the past of Kitty I knew little, as was well demonstrated by the appearance of Harvey Glade. My present fiancée had no past. With her and with me it was all future, which would gently crystallize, minute by minute and day by day, into a present which would be mutually our own.

Of course I said nothing of all this to any one. The knowledge of our destiny was locked up in the desk which held my diary, and in my own heart. When the proper time came, she first should know. I am an honorable man, and as such felt fully qualified to be the custodian of what was, in fact, her secret as well as mine.

I took an early opportunity to become acquainted with the one who was to be the future partner of my life. It was toward the end of October, I think, that

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I paid a visit to Dr. Tom Wiltby and his wife Jane, my predestined parents-in-law. Had they known the position they occupied toward me, they would have been a very much surprised couple. The interest I exhibited in their first-born did, as I thought, surprise them a little, but it only increased the warmth of the welcome they gave me, and drew me closer to their hearts. The emotions which possessed me when, in the preceding summer, I had stood awaiting the moment when Kitty Watridge should enter the room and first present herself to my sight were nothing to those which quickened the action of my heart as a nurse brought into the Wiltby parlor a carefully disposed bundle of drapery, in the midst of which reposed my future wife.

I approached and looked at her. Her face was displayed to view, but her form was undistinguishable. For an instant our eyes met, but, so far as I could judge, no spark of reciprocal sympathy seemed to shine from hers. In fact, they rolled about in an irrelevant manner which betokened a preoccupation so intense that even the advent of a husband could have no effect upon it. But whatever the child had on its mind—or stomach—gave a volatile mobility to its countenance which caused me to wonder much. The eyes then closed, and appeared to be writhing and swelling beneath their lids, the mouth was alternately convoluted and unrolled toward nose, cheeks, and chin, while the rest of the face, which had been of an Indian-reddish hue, now darkened, and from the puffy jaws to the top of the bald head seemed moved by a spasm, but whether of premonition or despair I could not tell.

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I withdrew my gaze. It might be well that I should wait for a time before allowing my eyes to feed upon this countenance.

I went away a little disappointed. The chaoticness of initiatory existence had never before been so forcibly impressed on my mind.

During the following winter and spring I built up an ideal, or rather a series of ideals. They were little children, they were girls, they were women. At about nineteen years of age the individual existence of each ended, and became merged into the oneness of my matrimonial life. Sometimes my ideal was a blonde, sometimes a brunette. From the cursory glance I had had of the one to whom all these fancies referred, I could not judge whether she would be dark or fair. She had no hair, and all that I could remember of her eyes was that they had no soul-light. Her father was dark, her mother fair. She might be either.

Of all the legendary heroines of love, none ever so impressed me as that Francesca whose strong love not only braved every prejudice and barrier of earth, but, according to eye-witnesses of the fact, floated with her indefinitely through hell. In verse and picture, and upon the stage, I knew Francesca well—better, perhaps, than any other woman. But to such a one I would not be merely a Paolo, but the elder brother also. I would have no proxy, no secret love, no unfaithfulness. There should be all the impetuosity, all the spirit of self-immolation, without any necessity for it. She who was to be mine had become, in my thoughts, a Francesca, and she grew before my mind to ripened loveliness. Her eyes sparkled with rap-

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ture when, as through the gates of old Ravenna, the fair Ghibelline first saw the brave rider that she thought to wed, and so this one would see, through the gates of womanly consciousness, not a mere envoy, but both Malatesta brothers in one—lover and husband—me. With such an imaginary one I read legends of old loves. With such a one I sat in shaded bowers, her young face upturned to mine, and the red light from the wings touching with color the passionate picture. But no jester watched with sneering gibes, no husband fought afar on battle-field. Paolo and Lanciotto in one looked into the uplifted eyes.

It was in the early summer that my two sisters and myself were invited to the Wiltby mansion for a visit, which our kindly hosts hoped would be somewhat protracted. Among other things that were to be done, the baby was to be baptized, and Grace Anna, for whom she was named, was to act as godmother. I was very glad to make this visit. Quite a long time had now elapsed since my first interview with Francesca, as I always intended to call her, notwithstanding the name that might be bestowed upon her by the church. And she must have begun now to foreshadow, in a measure, that which she was to be.

When I saw her I found there was not quite so much foreshadowing as I had expected. But, in spite of that, she was a little creature whom, without doing violence to any aesthetic instinct, I could take to my heart. She was a pudgy infant, with blue eyes, a blankety head, and a mouth that was generally ready to break into a smile if you tickled the corners of it. Instead of the long and flowing draperies in which I first beheld her, she now wore short dresses,

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and that she possessed remarkably fat legs and blue woollen socks was a fact which Francesca never failed to endeavor to impress upon my observation. I excited a great deal of surprise, with some admiration on the part of the mother and occasional jocular remarks from Bertha, my younger sister, by showing, at the very beginning of our visit, a strong preference for the society of the baby. I asked to be allowed to take her into my arms and walk with her into the garden. And although this privilege was at first denied me, unless some lady should accompany me, I being considered quite inexperienced in the care of an infant, I at last gained my point, and frequently had the pleasure of a tête-à-tête stroll with Francesca. With my future bride in my arms, slowly walking in the shaded avenues of the garden, I gave my imagination full play. I enlarged her eyes, and gave them a steadiness of upturn which they did not now possess. The white fuzz upon her head grew into rich masses of gold-brown hair, the nose was lengthened and refined, her lips were less protruded and made more continuously dry, while a good deal of fatty deposit was removed from the cheeks and the second chin. As I walked thus tenderly gazing down upon her, and often removing her little fist from her mouth, I pictured in her lineaments the budding womanhood for which I waited. I would talk softly to her, and although she seldom answered but in a gurgling monotone, I saw in our intercourse the dawning of a unity to be.

After we had been a few days at the Wiltby house Miss Kitty Watridge came there, also on a visit. Her engagement to Mr. Glade had not produced much

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effect upon her personal appearance, although I thought her something quieter, and with a little sedateness which I had not observed in her before. Her advent at this time was not to my liking. As an object of my regard, she had, in becoming engaged to another, ceased to exist. She had passed out of my sphere of consideration, and the fact that once she had acted a prominent part within it made it appear to me that propriety demanded that she should not only go out of it, but stay out of it.

Her influence upon my intercourse with Francesca was objectionable. My sisters had always been accustomed to regard my wishes with a gratifying respect, and Mrs. Wiltby seemed anxious to imitate them in this laudable action. But Miss Watridge had apparently no such ideas, and she showed this most objectionably by imagining that she had as much right to the baby as I had. Of course she could not understand how matters stood,—nobody but myself could understand that,—but she had not the native delicacy of perception of my sisters and Jane Wiltby. She could not know in how many ways she interfered with my desires and purposes.

My morning walks were broken up, for sometimes the newcomer actually insisted upon carrying the baby herself, in which case I retired and sought some other promenade. But after a few days I found that the indulgence of any resentment of this sort not only made me the object of remark, but promised to entirely break up my plans in regard to Francesca. I wished to create in my mind, while here, such an image of her, matured and perfected according to my own ideas, that I could live and commune with her

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during the absences, more or less protracted, which must intervene before the day when I should take her wholly to myself. As I could not expect to stay here very much longer, I must not lose what opportunities I had, and so concluded to resume my walks with Francesca, even if Miss Watridge should sometimes intrude herself upon us.

I must admit, however, that this she did not do, considering the matter with strict regard to fact. She generally possessed herself of the baby, and if I wished its company I was obliged to intrude myself upon her. The plan I now adopted was, I think, somewhat ingenious. As is my wont, I endeavored to shape to my advantage this obstacle which I now found in my way. My intercourse with Francesca had not been altogether satisfactory. For one thing, there had been too much unity about it. A certain degree of this was, indeed, desirable, but I was obliged to be, at once, not only husband and lover, but lady also, for Francesca gave me no help in this regard, except, perchance, an occasional look of entreaty, which might as well mean that she would like a bottle of milk as that she yearned for fond communion of the soul. When I addressed her as my developed ideal I imagined her answers, and so continued the gentle conversation. But although she always spoke as I would wish, there were absent from our converse certain desirable elements which might have been looked for from the presence of a second intellect. Another source of dissatisfaction was that in many of our interviews Francesca acted in a manner which was not only disturbing, but indecorous. Frequently, when I was speaking with her on such subjects as foreign

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travel, when we two should wander amid the misty purples of Caprian sunsets, or stand together in vast palaces of hoarded art, she would struggle so convulsively, and throw upward with such violence her small blue socks, that, for the time, I wished she was swaddled and bound in the manner of the Della Robbia babies on the front of the Foundling Asylum in Florence.

A plan for relieving myself from the obvious disadvantages of my present method of intercourse with an intellect, a soul, and a person, which, to be suitable for my companionship, must necessarily be projected into the future, now suggested itself to me. If Miss Watridge persisted in forcing herself upon Francesca, she might at least make herself useful by taking the place of that young person so far as regarded a part in the conversation. Her entity occupied a position in respect to growth and development which was about the same as that to which I was in the habit of projecting Francesca. Her answers to my remarks would be analogous, if not similar, to those which might be expected from the baby when she arrived at maturity. Thus, in a manner, I could talk to Francesca, and receive her answers from the lips of Miss Kitty. This would be as truly love-making by proxy as when the too-believing Lanciotto sent from Rimini his younger brother to bear to him Ravenna's pearl. But here was no guile, no dishonesty. The messenger, the vehicle, the interpreter, in this case, knew nothing of the feelings now in action, or to be set in action, of the principals in the affair. She did not know, indeed, that there were two principals. As far as she herself was concerned, she had, and could have, no in-

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terest in the matter. She was engaged to be married to Mr. Glade, which, in my eyes, was the same thing as being already married to him, and any thoughts or mental emotions that she might have relating to affectionate interest in one of the opposite sex would, of course, be centred in Mr. Glade. With Francesca and myself she would have nothing to do but unconsciously to assist in the transmission of sentiment. Had Paolo been engaged to marry a suitable young person before he started for Ravenna, it is probable that the limited partnership which Dante noticed in the Inferno would never have been formed.

It was by slow degrees, and with a good deal of caution, that I began my new course of action. Taking the child in my arms, I invited Miss Watridge to accompany us in our walk. Thus, together, we slowly strolled along the garden avenue, shaded by the fresh greenness of June foliage, and flecked here and there by patches of sunlight, which moved upon the gravel in unison with the gentle breeze. Our conversation, at first relating to simple and every-day matters, was soon directed by me into a channel in which I could perceive whether or not I should succeed in this project of representative rejoinder. It was not long before I was pleased to discover that the mind of the young lady was of as good natural quality and as well cultivated as I had formerly supposed it to be, having then little upon which to base my judgment, except the general impression her personality had made upon me. That impression having been entirely effaced, I was enabled with clearer vision and sounder judgment to determine the value of her mental exhibit. I found that she had read with some discrimi-

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nation, and with a tendency to independent thought she united a becoming respect for the opinions of those who, by reason of superior years, experience, and sex, might be supposed to move on a psychological plane somewhat higher than her own. These were dispositions the development of which I hoped to assist in the young Francesca, and it may be imagined that I was much gratified to find my model so closely resembling that personality which I wished, in a manner, to create.

Thus, up and down, daily, would we stroll and talk. With the real Francesca on my arm, sometimes sleeping, and sometimes indulging in disturbing muscular exercises, which I gently endeavored to restrain, I addressed myself to my ideal Francesca, an aerial maiden garbed in simple robes of white touched by a soft suggestion of Italian glow, and ever with tender eyes upturned to mine, while from her proxy, walking by my side, came to me the thoughts and sentiments of her fresh young heart.

It was quite natural that I should be more interested in a conversation of this kind than in one in which I was obliged to supply the remarks on either side. To be sure, in the latter case there was a unison of thought between myself and the ideal Francesca that was very satisfactory, but which lacked the piquancy given by unexpectedness of reply and the interest consequent upon gentle argument.

It so happened that the morning occupations of Mrs. Wiltby and my sisters were those in which Miss Watridge did not care to join, and thus she was commonly left free to make one of the company of four which took its morning walks upon the garden

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avenue. I imagine she supposed it was generally thought that she was taking care of the baby and affording it advantages of outdoor air, in the performance of which pleasing duty my presence was so unnecessary that the probability of it was not even considered. Thus it was that upon every fair day—and all those days were fair—our morning strolls were prolonged for an hour or more, generally terminated only by the culminating resolve of Francesca to attract to herself so much attention that a return to the house was necessary. It may be supposed that it would have been better to have eliminated the element of the actual being from the female side of our little company. But that side, several as it was in its component personages, represented to me the one Francesca. And had I not held and felt the presence of the actual living creature who was to be and to say all that my mind saw and my ear heard, I could not have spoken as I wished to speak to the ideality who was to be my wife when it became a reality. The conjunction seemed to me a perfect one, and under the circumstances I could wish for nothing better.

As our acquaintance ripened and mellowed in the pleasant summer days, I was enabled to see more clearly into the soul and heart of the Francesca that was to be, looking at them through the transparent mind of Miss Kitty Watridge. According to the pursuance of my plan, I gradually, and as far as possible imperceptibly, changed the nature of our converse. From talking of the material world, and those objects in it which had pleased our vision or excited reflection, we passed to the consideration, very cursory at first, of those sentiments which appear to emanate

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from ourselves without the aid of extraneous agency. Then, by slow degrees, the extraneous agency was allowed to enter upon the scene, coming in so quietly that at first it was scarcely noticeable. The dependence of man upon man was discussed, not only for material good, but for intellectual support and comfort. Then, following a course not exactly in accordance with that of nature, but which suited my purposes, we spoke of social ties—of the friendships which spring up here and there from these, of the natural affections of the family, and, finally, the subject arising in consistent sequence, of that congruent intermental action of the intellect of two persons, generally male and female, who frequently, without family ties of any kind and but little previous acquaintanceship, find, each in the other, an adaptiveness of entity which is mutually satisfactory.

The vicarious replies of Francesca were, in almost every instance, all that I could have wished. Sometimes there were symptoms of hesitancy or reluctance in the enunciation of what was obviously the suitable reply to some of my remarks in regard to the deeper sentiments. But, on the whole, had the ideal lady of my love spoken to me, her words could not have better aroused my every sentiment of warm regard.

Sometimes I wondered, as thus we walked and talked, what Mr. Glade would think about it if he could see us so much together, and listen to our converse. But this thought I put aside as unworthy of me. It was an insult to myself as an honorable man. It was an uncalled-for aspersion on Miss Watridge, and a stain upon my idealistic intercourse with Francesca. If Mr. Glade were coarse and vulgar enough to

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interject his personality into this perfectly working system of intellectual action, from which the individuality of Miss Watridge was entirely eliminated, her part in it being merely to represent another, I could not help it. It was this consciousness of rectitude, this probity of purpose, which raised our little drama so far above the level of the old story of the wedded Guelph and Ghibelline.

With my mind satisfied on this subject, I did not hesitate, when the proper time seemed to have arrived, to allow myself to imagine Francesca at the age of nineteen. I could not much longer remain in this place, as we had now overstayed the original limit of our visit, and there was danger, too, that Miss Watridge might be called away. I wished, while the opportunity continued, to develop the imaginary life of Francesca into perfect womanhood, so that I could carry away with me an image of my future wife, which I could set upon the throne of my affection, there to be revered, cherished, and guarded until the time came when the real Francesca should claim the seat. Of course, under these circumstances, a certain fervor of thought and expression was not only necessary but excusable, and I did not scruple to allow it to myself. Always with the real Francesca in my arms, in order that even my own superconscientiousness might not take me to task, I delivered my sentiments without drawing the veil of precautionary expression over their amatory significance. It was at this stage of our intercourse that I asked Miss Watridge to allow me to call her Francesca, for it was only by so doing that I could fully identify her voice with that of the visionary creature who was now ex-

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citing the stirring impulses of my heart. When she asked me why I wished to call her by this name, I could only tell her that it was for ideal purposes. And without making further inquiries, she consented that I should use it—for the present. As it was only for the present that I thought of so doing, this much of acquiescence was sufficient, and I called her by the name I loved.

The softly spoken, well-considered replies, the gentle ejaculations, and the demure but earnest attention which my speech elicited, well befitted the fairest vision of pure young womanhood that my soul could call before me. But, notwithstanding this, there was something wanting. I longed for the upturned eyes, ever fixed upon my own, of the Francesca of the stage. I longed for the fair white hands clasped and trembling as I spoke. I longed for that intensity of soul-merge in which the loved one breathes and lives only that she may hear the words I speak, and watch the thoughts that fashion in my face. Without all this I could never take away with me the image of the true Francesca. Without this there would be wanting, in the fair conception, that artistic roundness, that completeness of outline and purpose, which would satisfy the exigencies of my nature. I could not consent to carry with me for years an ideal existence, incomplete, imperfected—a statue devoid of those last touches of the master which make it seem to live.

Therefore I sought, with much earnestness and fixity of intention, to call up the last element needed to complete that lovely creation which was to be my companion through the years of waiting for the real Francesca. It was a great comfort and support to me

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to reflect that I could do this with such safety, with such unusual advantages. I addressed myself to no being in existence. Even the little creature on my arm, who had fallen into a habit of dozing when not noticed, and to whom belonged, in fact, my every gift and legacy of love, was not of age to come into her fortune, nor could her infantile mind be injured by its contemplation. And as for Miss Watridge, she, as I continually repeated to myself, was acting simply as the representative of another, and her real self was not concerned in the little drama, in which she did not even take a part, merely assuming, as in a rehearsal, a character which another actor, not able then to be present, would play in the actual performance.

It was the loveliest morning of all the summer that I made my supreme effort. At the very bottom of the garden was a little arbor of honeysuckles. No crimson stage-light shone in upon it, but the sunbeams pushed their way here and there through the screen of leaves, and brightened the interior with points of light. It was a secluded spot, to which I had never yet led my companions, for the period had not before arrived for such sequesterment. But now we sat down here upon a little bench, I at one end, the young Francesca on my knee, and Miss Watridge at my left. In the place where this lady sat also sat the ideal Francesca, occupying the same space, and endowed, for the time, with the same form and features. It was to this being that I now addressed my fervid words, low-burning, it is true, but alive with all the heat and glow that precedes blaze. I told a tale, not reading from pages of mediæval script the

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legend of the love of Launcelot and Queen Guinevere, as does Paolo in the play, but relating a story which was a true one, for it was my own. I spoke as I expected to speak some day to the little creature on my knee. Taking with my disengaged hand that of the lady by my side, I said that which raised a lovely countenance to mine, that showed me the beauty of her upturned eyes. And as I looked and spoke I felt that the very pulses of her soul were throbbing in accord with mine. Here was enacting in very truth the scene I had viewed upon the stage, and which so often since had risen before my fancy. Possessed by the spirit of this scene, carried onward by that same tide of passionnal emotion the gradual rise of which it had portrayed, I gave myself up to its influences, and acted it out unto its very culmination. I stooped and, in the words of the Arthurian legend, I "kissed her full upon the mouth."

Swift as the sudden fall of summer rain, I felt the wild abandonment of clinging arms about my neck, of tears upon my face that were not mine, of words of love that I spoke not; and it came to me like a flash that she who clung to me, and around whom my arm was passed, was Kitty Watridge, and not a visionary Ghibelline.

In the midst of my varying emotions I clasped closer to me the real Francesca, who thereupon gave vent to her feelings by parting wide her toothless gums and filling the summer air with a long yell. At this rude interruption, the arms fell from my neck, and the face was quickly withdrawn from mine.

Now came hurrying steps upon the gravel walk, and my sister Bertha ran in upon us. "What on

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earth are you doing to that baby?" she cried. She snatched the child from me, and then stood astonished, gazing first at me and then at Kitty, who had started to her feet, with sparkling tears still in her eyes and a sunset glow upon her face. Without a word, the wicked Bertha laughed a little laugh, and, folding the child within her arms, she ran away.

I sat speechless for a moment, and then I turned to Kitty. But she, too, had gone, having fled in another direction. I was left alone. Gone was the real Francesca, gone was the fair ideal, gone was Kitty. I stood bewildered, and, in a manner, dazed. I felt as if I had fallen from the fourteenth century into the nineteenth, and that the shock had hurt me. I felt, too, a sense of culpability, as if I had been somewhere where I had no right to be, as if I had been a trespasser, a poacher, an intruder upon the times or on the rights of others. The fact that I was a strictly honorable man, scorning perfidy in its every form, made my feelings the more poignant. A little reflection helped me to understand it all. I had carried out my plan so carefully, with such regard to its gradual development, that by degrees Miss Watridge had grown into the ideal Francesca, and had, to all intents and purposes, gone back with me into the middle ages, in order to better portray my perfected ideal. The baby sitting on my right knee, while a future stage of her life was being personated by the lady at my side, might belong to any age. There was nothing incongruous in her presence on the scene. It was the entrance of my sister Bertha that broke the spell, that shattered the whole fabric I had so elaborately built. She was of the present, of to-day, of the

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exact second, in which she helped anything to happen. An impersonation of the now, her coming banished every idea of the past or future.

Like an actor in a play, on whom his every-day clothes and the broad light of day have suddenly fallen, I walked slowly to the house. Meeting my older sister, Grace Anna, near the door, I took her aside and said to her, "When is Mr. Glade expected here?"

"What for?" she asked, with eyes dilated.

"To marry Kitty Watridge," said I.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed my sister. "That match was broken off last winter."

IT may well be supposed that, remembering what Bertha had seen and doubtless imagined, that remembering what Kitty had done and said, and recalling, too, how I felt when she did it and said it, I resolved, instead of waiting eighteen long years for another, to accept as the Francesca of my dreams, and as the veritable wife of my actual existence, this dear girl, who was able to represent at this very present the every attribute and quality of my ideal woman.

In the autumn we were married. Thus my fate, disclaiming my efforts to assist it, no matter in what direction, rose dominant, and, attending to my affairs in its own way, gave me Kitty at last.

But I shall always feel sorry for the baby.

MY BULL-CALF

MY BULL-CALF

I AM an animal-painter, and although I am not well known to fame, I have painted a good many pictures, most of which may now be seen on the walls of my studio. In justice to myself I must say that the critics of the art exhibitions and those persons competent to judge who have visited my studio have spoken in praise of my pictures, and have given me a good place among the younger artists of the country. Sometimes, indeed, they have said things about the suggested sentiment of some of my work which I am too modest here to repeat. But in spite of this commendation, which I labor hard to deserve, there has been no great demand for my paintings.

A facetious brother artist once attempted to explain the slowness of my sales. "You see," said he, "painting changes the nature of its subjects. In real life animals frequently go off very rapidly, but when they are painted they don't."

The same gentleman also made a good deal of fun of one of my first paintings—a dead lion. This animal had died in a menagerie in the city, and having heard of his decease, I bought his remains for five dollars, and after dark I conveyed them to my studio in a wheelbarrow. I was quite young and enthusiastic

MY BULL-CALF

then, and as the animal had apparently died of a consumption, he was not very heavy. I worked day and night at a life-size (so to speak) portrait of the beast, and it was agreed by all who saw it that I succeeded very well. But no one seemed inclined in the slightest degree to buy the picture. "What you are waiting for," said my facetious friend, "is the visit of a live ass. When he comes along he will buy that thing, and make your fortune."

My latest work was a life-size picture of a bull-calf. Some time before, I determined to devote myself to cattle-painting, and had bought a cow for a model. This I did because I found it difficult to have control over the cows of other people. I live a short distance out of town, and while the farmers thereabout were very willing that I should go into the fields and sketch their cows, they would not allow me to pen one of them up in a confined space, where I could study her form and features instead of following her, easel and materials in hand, over a sometimes marshy pasture.

My cow proved a very valuable possession. I rented a small grassy field for her, and put up a cheap and comfortable shed in one corner of it. I sold her milk to the good lady with whom I lived, and my model cow paid all her expenses, attendance included. She was a gentle creature, and becoming accustomed to my presence, would generally remain in one position for a long time, and when I stirred her up would readily assume some other attitude of repose. I did not always copy her exactly. Sometimes I gave her one color and sometimes another, and sometimes several blended. At one time I gave her horns, and at another none, and in this way I frequently made a

MY BULL-CALF

herd of her, scattering her over a verdant mead. I did not always even paint her as a cow. With a different head and branching horns, a longer neck, a thinner body, a shorter tail, and longer legs, she made an excellent stag, the lifelike poses which I was enabled to get giving the real value to the picture. Once I painted her as a sphinx, her body couched in the conventional way, with claws at the ends of the legs instead of hoofs. She was a little altered in contour, and made an admirable study. There was a thoughtful expression in her eye, as she meditatively crunched a cabbage-leaf, and I gave it to the woman's head that I placed upon her.

"What a far-off, prophetic look it has!" said one who stood before the picture when it was finished. "It seems to gaze across the sands of Egypt, and to see things thousands of years ahead. If you could fix up a little bit of sunset in the distance, with some red and yellow clouds in the shape of the flag of England, the symbolized sentiment would be quite perfect."

The bull-calf which afterwards served as my model was the son of my cow. When he was old enough to go about by himself and eat hay and grass, I sold his mother at a good profit, and retained him as a model, and the life-size picture of him, on which I worked for a long time, was my masterpiece. When it was nearly finished I brought it to my studio, and there, day after day, I touched and retouched it, often thinking it finished, but always finding, when I went home and looked at my calf, that there was something of life and truth in the real animal which I had not given to the picture, and which I afterwards strove to suggest, if not to copy.

MY BULL-CALF

I had a friend who occupied a studio in the same building, and who took a great interest in the portrait of my bull-calf. The specialty of this artist was quiet landscape and flowers, and we had frequently gone into the country and sketched together, the one drawing the cattle, and the other the field in which they roved. One day we stood before my almost completed work.

"What a spirited and lifelike air he has!" remarked my companion. "He looks as if he were just about to hunch up his back, give a couple of awkward skips, and then butt at us. I really feel like shutting the door, when I come in, for fear he should jump down and run away. You are going to brighten up the foreground a little, are you not?"

"Yes," I answered. "And what it needs is a modest cluster of daisies in this corner. Won't you paint them in for me? You can do it so much better than I can!"

"No," she answered, "I positively will not. No one but yourself should touch it. It is your very best work, and it should be all your picture."

In the course of my life I had not had, or at least I believed that I had not had, many of those pieces of good fortune which people call opportunities. Now here was one, and I determined to seize it. "Why can it not be *our* picture?" I asked.

She looked up at me with a quick glance which seemed to say, "What! are you about to speak at last?"

In ten minutes all had been said, and we were engaged to be married.

Our studios were opposite each other, separated by

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a wide hall, and it had been our custom, when one went to luncheon, for the other to sit with open door, so that visitors to the absent one might be seen and attended to. Emma generally lunched at a quiet restaurant near by, much frequented by ladies, and where an occasional male visitor might be seen, and to this place I also went as soon as she came back. I knew her favorite little table in the corner, and I always tried to occupy the place she had just vacated. But to-day we determined to lock our studio doors and lunch together. There was really very little reason to expect a visitor. The waiter who attended to our wants was a quiet colored man, with white hair and whiskers, and an expression of kindly observation on his sable countenance. He arranged our table with much care, and listened to our orders with a deference I had not noticed before. But perhaps he always waited thus on ladies. While we were eating, he retired to a little distance, and stood regarding us with an interested but not too intent attention. We had so often eaten at the same table, but never before at the same time.

When we returned we went first to my studio, and when we opened the door the bull-calf seemed to smile. We both noticed it.

"There is something in the way he looks at us," said Emma, "that reminds me of our old waiter."

"Strange," I replied. "I noticed that myself."

Again I urged her to make the daisies for me, but she still refused.

"No," she said. "It is your picture, and you must not be unable to say that you did it all yourself. Besides, if I were to put in any daisies, your calf is so

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natural that he would snip them off. I will not have my daisies snipped off, even by that handsome creature."

She looked up, as she said this, with a smile as bright and fresh as any daisy, and I— But never mind.

The next day we again went together to the restaurant, and the kindly observation deepened on the face of the waiter. When he had arranged with unusual nicety the little table service, he placed before Emma a wine-glass containing a buttonhole bouquet. As we were leaving he detained me a moment, and said in a low voice :

"After this, sir, if you would first order your beef for one with two plates, and then order the lady's chicken and salad for one with two plates, you would each have some beef and some chicken. It wouldn't cost any more, sir, and it would make more of a menu."

"After this'!" I mentally repeated, as I gratefully put my hand in my pocket. If that old waiter had been an artist, what a gift his powers of observation would have been to him!

We agreed that we would be married in the early autumn, for truly there was little reason for delay. "It has been so many, many months," I said, "since I declared to myself that I would never marry any one but you that I really consider that I have been engaged to you for a very long time."

"I may as well admit that something of the same kind has passed through my mind. It is no harm to tell you so now, and it will make more of a menu."

If my calf really cared to snip daisies, he must have envied me then.

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There was no impediment to our early marriage except the fact that neither of us had any money.

“What you must do,” said Emma, “is to finish your picture and sell it. You must stop looking at the calf you have at home. Of course he is growing every day, and new beauties are coming out on him all the time. You cannot expect to have his picture keep pace with his development. After a while you will have to give him horns and make him larger.”

“The model is bigger now than the picture,” I said, “and I must take your advice, and stop looking at him. If I don’t, his portrait will never be done.”

I would not put any flowers in the foreground, for, if I did so, I was sure they would look as if they had been picked out of a lady’s bonnet. After what I had seen Emma do, I knew I could not paint daisies and buttercups. I put in some pale mullein-leaves, and a point of rock which caught the light, and when this was done I determined to call the picture finished.

“What are you going to ask for it?” asked Emma.

“I had thought of a thousand dollars. Don’t you consider that a reasonable price?”

“I think it is a very low price,” she answered, “considering the size of the picture and the admirable way in which it is painted. I imagine it is seldom that a picture like it is offered at a thousand dollars. But as you want to sell it very much, I suppose it will be well not to ask any more.”

“I do want very much to sell it,” I said, giving her hand a squeeze which she understood.

I had also made up my mind in regard to the mode of disposing of the picture. Some weeks before, an artist friend in Boston had written to me that a well-

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known picture-dealer would open in that city early in September an art establishment particularly for the sale of pictures on commission, and that he would inaugurate his enterprise with an exhibition of paintings, which he wished to make as extensive and attractive as possible.

"If you have anything good finished in time," wrote my friend, "I think you will do well to send it to Schemroth. He knows your work, and, if I mistake not, bought one of your pictures when he was in business in New York. I doubt if he has many animal subjects, and he wants variety. He says he is going to make his exhibition one of the art features of the season."

Emma agreed with me that I could not do better than to send my picture to Schemroth. He was an enterprising man, and would be certain to do everything he could to attract attention to his exhibition, and she felt sure that if the art public of Boston had a good opportunity of seeing my picture it would certainly be sold.

The painting was carefully packed and sent to Boston, in care of my friend there, who shortly afterwards wrote me that Schemroth liked it, and had given it a good place in his gallery, which would open in a day or two. My studio looked very bare and empty after the departure of my spirited bull-calf, so long my daily companion. But my mind was so occupied with the consideration of the important event which was to follow his sale that I did not miss him as much as I would otherwise have done. Emma and I talked a good deal about the best way of beginning our married life, and I was much in favor of a trip to

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Europe, but in regard to this she did not agree with me.

“A thousand dollars,” she said, “would not go far for such a purpose. The steamer tickets would cost us about a hundred dollars apiece, and that would be four hundred dollars to go and come back. Then you certainly ought to keep a hundred dollars for your own use before you start, and that would only leave five hundred dollars with which to go to Paris and Rome and Dresden. If we did less than that, it would be hardly worth while to go at all. And five hundred dollars would not begin to be enough for two people.”

I was obliged to admit that she was correct, and the European trip was given up.

“My idea is,” said Emma, “that we ought to take the money and furnish a house with it. That will be a good, practical beginning, and after a while, when we have painted a few more pictures, we can go to Europe. You should keep a hundred dollars for your own use. We could put aside two hundred for rainy days or whatever kind of weather it may be when money is needed and there is none coming in, and then with seven hundred dollars we could buy enough furniture and other things to begin housekeeping in a small way. By this plan, you see, sir, your beautiful calf would give us an excellent start in life.”

This proposition needed no discussion. Before she had half finished speaking I was convinced that nothing could be more sensible and delightful. “We must look for a house immediately,” I said. “It will not do to put off that part of the business. We should know where we are going to live, so that when we are ready to buy the furniture there need be no delay.”

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Good fortunes as well as misfortunes sometimes object to coming singly, and just at this time I heard of something which was certainly a piece of rare good luck to a young couple contemplating matrimony. A gentleman named Osburn, who lived near my country home, with whom I had become well acquainted, and to whom I had confided the important news of my engagement, met me on the train a day or two after Emma and I had agreed upon the furniture project, and told me that if I intended to go to housekeeping he thought he could offer me a desirable opportunity.

"My wife and I," he said, "wish very much to travel for a year or two, and the time has now arrived when we can do it, if we can dispose of our household effects, and get some one to take our house, on which we have a lease. Now if you are going to marry, and care for a place like ours, it might be worth your while to consider the question of taking it and buying our furniture. We will sell everything just as it is, excepting, of course, the books and such small articles as have a personal value, and you can walk right in and begin housekeeping at once. Everything was new two years ago, and you know my wife is a very careful house-keeper. The house is small and very simply furnished, and I have no doubt you would want to add all sorts of things, but at first you wouldn't really need anything that you wouldn't find there. We wish to dispose of the whole establishment—linen, china, silver (it's only plated, but it's very good), kitchen utensils, garden tools, a lot of fine poultry, a dog, a cat—everything, in fact, excepting the few articles I spoke of. What do you say?"

"Say!" I exclaimed. "There is nothing to say,

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except that I should be perfectly delighted to take the place off your hands if I could afford it, but I am afraid your price would be above my means. I suppose you would want to sell all or nothing?"

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Osburn. "It would not pay us to sell out piecemeal, and we do not wish to let the house to any one who will not buy the furniture. If you think the proposition worth considering, my wife and I will make an estimate of what we consider the effects worth, and let you know."

I told him I should be very glad indeed to know, and he said I should hear from him in a day or two.

When I told Emma of this, and described to her the Osburns' house, with its neat and comfortable furniture, its aesthetic wall-paper, its convenient and airy rooms, its well-kept garden and little lawn, its handsome barn and poultry-house, the wide pasture-field belonging to it, the little patch of woodland at the upper end, the neatness and order of everything about the place, and all this at a very moderate rental, with a lease that had several years to run, she agreed with me that while it would be perfectly delightful to take this ready-made home off the Osburns' hands, there was no reason for us to hope that we should be able to do it. We should have to be content with something far less complete and perfect than this.

Two days after, I received a note from Osburn. "We have carefully considered the present value of our possessions," he said, "with an especial view of making it an object to you to buy them as a whole. Everything is in good order, but as we have had two years' use of the articles, we have considered that fact in making an estimate of what we think we ought to re-

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ceive for them. After going over the matter several times, we have determined to offer you the furniture and other things of which I spoke to you for seven hundred and fifty dollars."

"Why," cried Emma, as she read this letter over my shoulder (for I had taken it into her studio before I opened it), "that is only fifty dollars more than we had appropriated!"

"But we won't stop for that!" I exclaimed.

"Stop!" she said, as with sparkling eyes and glowing cheeks she took both my hands in her own,—regardless of the fact that she already held a brush heavily charged with Vandyke brown,—"I should think not!"

To work any more then was impossible for either of us. That afternoon we shut up both our studios, and went out to look at the paradise which had been offered us. Mr. Osburn had not yet come home, but his wife took great pleasure in making Emma's acquaintance and in showing us over the house and grounds. We found everything better of its kind, better adapted to the place in which it was, better suited to our every purpose, and altogether ever so much more desirable, than we had thought. I never saw Emma so enthusiastic. Even the picture of my bull-calf had not moved her thus. If the price had not been fixed beforehand, our delighted satisfaction would have been very impolitic. When Mr. Osburn returned I told him without hesitation that I would accept his offer. I think that he and his wife were almost as much pleased as we were. They had set their hearts on an extended tour in the South and far West. The lady's health demanded this, and her husband had found that he

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could now so arrange his business as to unite travel with profit. But it would have been impossible, as he afterwards told me, for him to adopt this new mode of life without first disposing of his furniture and household goods. Ready money, I fancy, was not abundant with him.

When we took leave of the Osburns, four people in very high spirits stood shaking hands in the porch of the pretty house in which we had decided to make our home. There was an extraordinarily good point in this extraordinary piece of good fortune which had befallen us. If the Osburns had wished to settle the business with us at once, it would, of course, have been impossible for us to do our part; but it would be at least six weeks before they intended to give up their house, and in that time we felt quite sure that my picture would be sold. But although we could take no actual steps toward making our arrangements for housekeeping, there was nothing to prevent our thinking and talking about them, and planning what was to be done. And this occupied a great deal of our time, much to the detriment, I am sure, of our daily work. We were always finding new good points in the matter.

“The only things about the Osburn house that I don’t like,” said Emma, “are the pictures and the bric-à-brac. Now these are the things that they want to keep, and if we are well off in any way, it is in pictures, and we can just take some of the paintings we have on hand, and a lot of our large engravings, and have them framed, and with that old armor and brass and china which you have collected, and which an animal-painter doesn’t want in his studio anyway, we can make our house look lovely. I have collected

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too, and I have a good many nice things in my room which you have never seen."

"The house is a good one now," I exclaimed, "but it will look like another place when you and I get into it! And there is another thing that I have been thinking about. Of course I'll take my calf over there the first thing, and he will get a great deal better eating in that meadow than he has now. But he won't be the only animal we shall have. I intend to have a little model-farm—that is to say, a farm on which we will keep models. Of course we shall have a cow, and she will not only give us milk and butter, but I can paint her. There is a fine little barn and stable on the place, but Osburn says he never thought he ought to keep a horse, because the house is only five minutes from the station, and it would be a piece of sheer extravagance for him to have a horse merely to drive about after he came home at night. But it wouldn't be extravagant in me. It would be actual economy. I ought to paint horses, and to do so properly and economically I should own one. And so with all sorts of animals. If I buy a fine dog or a beautiful cat, it will actually be money in my pocket."

"That is true," said Emma. "But you mustn't bring any wild animals there until they are so dead that you can wheel them home in a wheelbarrow. It will be perfectly delightful to have a horse, and as I intend to paint birds as well as flowers, I can begin on the hens and little chickens and the ducks, and the sparrows and robins, if I can make them tame enough for me to sketch them."

"Yes," I exclaimed, "and you can paint the wild flowers in your own field! And we'll raise splendid

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Jacqueminot roses, and the hybrid tea, and other fine kinds. We will have a room for them in the winter, so that you can always have flowers for models, at whatever stage you want them."

In the weeks that followed we paid several visits to the Osburns by their invitation, during which the husband explained to me the management of the celery-beds, and many of his outdoor improvements, while the wife had some long conversations with Emma about her household arrangements.

As the time approached when the Osburns wished to give up their house, Emma and I became very anxious to hear from Boston. I had written to my friend there, explaining the situation, and he had promised to attend to the matter, and see that Schemroth communicated with me as soon as the picture was sold. So there was nothing to do but wait. I frequently met Mr. Osburn on the train, and I began to feel, as the time passed on, that I ought to be able to say something to him about concluding our bargain.

Of course he must have his preparations to make, and he would not wish to delay them too long. Although there was no real reason for it, as we assured ourselves over and over, both Emma and I began to be very uneasy, and we sometimes even regretted that we had accepted Mr. Osburn's offer. If we had not complicated the affair in this way we could have calmly waited until the picture was sold, and have then done what seemed to us best. There was no probability that we would have met with so good an opportunity of going to housekeeping, but we should have been independent and easy in our minds. But now we were neither. The plans and prospects of

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others depended upon us, and our uneasiness and anxiety increased every day. I disliked to meet Mr. Osburn, and every morning hoped that he would not be on the train. Never did I await the arrival of the mails with more anxiety and impatience.

One day, as Emma and I were returning from luncheon, the janitor of the building met us at the door. "A box came for you, sir, by express," he said. "I paid two dollars and twenty cents on it. It is up in your room."

I said nothing, but put my hand in my pocket. I began to count the money in my pocket-book, but my hand shook, and I dropped a quarter of a dollar on the floor, which rolled off to some distance. As the janitor went to pick it up, Emma approached me, and I noticed that she was very pale.

"If you haven't enough," she said, "I have some change with me."

I needed seventy cents to make up the sum, and Emma gave it to me. Then, without a word, we went up-stairs. We did not hurry, but it was the first time, I think, that I ever became out of breath in going up those stairs. The moment we looked at the box, we knew: the picture had been sent back.

I gazed at it blankly, reading over and over the painted address.

"Perhaps you would better open it," said Emma, in a very low voice. "It may not be—"

As quickly as I could I took off the centre board. The bull-calf, with a melancholy greeting in his eyes, looked out upon us. Then Emma sat down upon the nearest chair and burst into tears, and I drew near to comfort her.

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Half an hour later I had taken the picture from the box, which I carefully searched. "Do you know," I cried, a sudden anger taking the place of the deadened sensation of my heart, "that this is an outrageous insult? He should have written to me before he sent it back. But to return it without a word or line of any kind is simply brutal."

I said a great deal more than this. I was very angry. I would write to Schemroth, and let him know what I thought of this. Emma now endeavored to soothe my passion, and urged me not to do anything in a moment of excitement which might injure me from a business point of view. I did not promise forbearance, but suddenly exclaimed: "And then, there is Osburn! He must be told. It will be a hard, hard thing to do! They will both be terribly disappointed. It will break up all their plans."

"I have thought about the Osburns," said Emma, coming close to me and putting her hands upon my arm, "and I will tell you what we will do. I will go and see Mrs. Osburn. That will be much better than for you to see her husband. She will not be angry, and I can explain everything to her so that she will understand."

"No, my dear," said I, "that will not do. I shall not suffer you to bear what must be the very heaviest brunt of this trouble. In a case like this it is the duty of the man to put himself forward. I must go immediately and see Osburn at his office before he starts for home."

"I wish you would not," she said earnestly. "Of course the man ought to take the lead in most things, but there may be times when it will be easier and better for the wife to go first."

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The moment she said these words she blushed, and I snatched her into my arms. "The wife"! If those rich lovers of art had only known what they might have made of this dear girl by buying my picture, it would never have come back to me.

But time was flying, and if I was to see Osburn at his office, I must hurry. The thing was hard enough to do, as it was, and I did not feel that I could have the heart to tell the story in the presence of his wife.

"If he is very much troubled," said Emma, "and says anything to you which you do not like, you will not let him make you angry, will you?"

"Oh, no," said I. "I am not so unreasonable as that. I have so much pity for him that he may say to me what he pleases. I will bear it all."

"I am very sorry for you," said Emma, looking up at me, "and I do wish you would let me see Mrs. Osburn."

But I was firm in my resolution not to shift this very unpleasant duty upon Emma, and in a few minutes I had started down-town. When I reached Mr. Osburn's place of business I found he had gone home, although it was several hours earlier than his usual time of leaving. "He had something he wanted to attend to at his house," said one of the clerks.

This was a great disappointment to me, for now I would be obliged to go to see him that evening, and most probably to tell him the bad news in the presence of his wife. I did not fully appreciate until now how much easier it would have been to talk to him at his desk in the city. As I walked toward the Osburns' house just after dark, that evening, I could scarcely believe that I was going to the place which I had

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lately visited with such delight. Emma and I had already fallen into the way of considering the house and grounds as our own, and as I opened the gate I remembered how we had stood there while I told her about some improvements I intended to make in said gate, so that the weight and chain would never fail to latch it. But now it made no difference to me whether the gate latched or not. And the flower borders, too, on each side of the path. How Emma had talked to me, when we had walked far enough away so as to be sure not to hurt Mrs. Osburn's feelings, of what she intended to do with those borders! It all seemed to me like visiting the grave of a home.

But I walked steadily on. The parlor shutters were wide open, and the room was brightly lighted, so that I could see plainly what was passing within. There was an air of disorder about the pretty room. Mr. Osburn, in his shirt-sleeves, was on a step-ladder, taking down a picture from the wall, while his wife stood below, ready to receive it. All the other pictures—the portraits of their parents and the chromos which Emma and I thought so little of, but which they valued so highly—had already been taken down. These, with various little articles of ornament and use, valuable to them on account of association with some dear friend or some dear time, were the things which they intended to reserve. It was plain that it was to take down and pack up these that Mr. Osburn had come home early that day. It was now only four days from the date he had fixed for surrendering the house to me, and he was working hard to have everything ready for us. He knew very well that Emma and I had arranged that we would be

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quietly married as soon as the house should be ours, and that in this charming home, all ready to our hand, we would immediately begin our married life. How earnestly and honestly they were doing their part !

I do not think I am a coward, but as I stood and gazed at these two I felt that it would be simply impossible for me to walk into that room and tell them that they might hang up their pictures again and unpack their bric-à-brac, and that they were not going to take the pleasant journeys they had planned, until they had found some other person, more able to keep to his word than I was, who should take their house and buy their goods.

No, I could not do it. I would go home and write to Osburn. I did not feel that this was as manly a course as to speak to him face to face, but I could not speak to him now. As I was about to turn away, Osburn got down from the ladder, and they both looked around the room. Their faces wore an expression of pleasant satisfaction at the conclusion of their task, but mingled, I truly believe, with a feeling of regret that they should leave to us such bare walls. How Emma and I had talked of what we intended to do with those walls ! How I had drawn little sketches of them, and how we had planned and arranged for every space !

I hurried home, wrote a note, and tore it up. I wrote another, but that, too, did not properly express the situation. It was late, and I could do no more. I would write in the morning, take the letter into town and show it to Emma, and then send it to Osburn at the office.

The next day Emma was in my studio, reading the

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disgraceful confession I had written, when the janitor came in and handed me a letter.

"It is from Osburn!" I exclaimed, glancing at the address, as the man closed the door behind him. "I know his handwriting. Now this is too bad. If Schemroth had only treated me with decent politeness I could have seen Osburn, or have written to him, before he felt himself obliged to remind me that the time had come for me to attend to my part of the contract."

"But you must not allow yourself to be so disturbed," said Emma. "You don't know what he has written."

"That is the only thing he could write about," said I, bitterly, as I opened the letter. "It is very humiliating."

We read the note together. It was very brief, and ran thus :

"DEAR SIR: I have a customer who is willing to buy your picture, but he is dissatisfied with the foreground. If you will put in some daisies or other field flowers to brighten it up and throw the animal a little back, he will take it. I can ask him enough to cover your price and my commission. As I am sure you will make the alterations, I will forward the picture to you immediately.

"Yours truly,
"L. SCHEMROTH."

The letter had been written four days previously.

We looked at each other, unable to speak. Our great cloud had turned completely over, and its lining dazzled us. We found words very soon, but I will not repeat them here. We could have fallen down and worshipped our painted calf!

"And now, my darling," I cried, "will you put the daisies in our picture?"

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"Indeed will I," she said. And away she ran for her paints and brushes.

The rest of that afternoon she painted steadily, while I sat beside her, watching every touch of her brush.

"This daisy," she said, as she finished the first one, is to make you happy, and the next one will be for myself. Then I will paint two more, for Mr. and Mrs. Osburn—and you must not fail to go and tell them to-night that you will settle up our business in a very short time. And I will paint a small daisy for Mr. Schemroth, and if he hadn't forgotten to mail his letter when it was written I would have made his daisy bigger."

The picture soon went back to Boston, and the original of it now spends most of his time looking over the fence of his pasture into the pretty yard of the house where the Osburns used to live, and hoping that some one will come and give him some cabbage-leaves. If he could see all that there is to be seen, he would see that the parlor of that house is hung with the spoils from the studios of two artists, that there is a room in the second story, with a northern light, in which flowers grow on canvas as beautifully as they grow in the fields and garden, and where a large picture is steadily progressing in which he figures as "The Coming Monarch." He would also see, far away on the Pacific shore, another couple whom he has helped to make happy. And if he could cast his eyes Bostonward, he would see, every now and then, Mr. Schemroth writing to me to know when I could send him other animal pictures, and assuring me that he can find ready and profitable sale for all that I can paint. And, best of all, he could see, every day, Emma painting daisies into my life.

AS ONE WOMAN TO ANOTHER

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IT was a beautiful, quiet August morning, and I lay in a hammock, looking up at the blue and cloudless sky. The hammock was hung between two trees on the back lawn of my father's country house. A few hundred feet to the right, the roof and chimneys of the house rose above the tree-tops. At the foot of the lawn, not quite so far away, a little river ran. I could not see it, but now and then I heard the gurgle of the water, and this, with the singing and chirping of the birds and the occasional chatter of a red squirrel in a tree near by, were all the sounds I heard upon that quiet morning.

Gazing upward past the nearest tree-tops, I saw against the sky a little black spot. This was odd, and I waved my hand in front of my face, thinking it might be some fly or insect near me. But it was nothing of the kind. It was a spot in the sky. I moved my head from side to side, but I could see it only in one place. It was not the effect of disordered vision, it was not fancy : it was really a spot against the sky.

I sat up in my hammock and gazed steadfastly at the distant speck, and as I looked I could see that it was growing larger. In less than ten minutes I saw that it was a balloon, and that it was slowly approaching in

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my direction, and also descending. I ran out on the open lawn to get a better view of it. There was a very gentle wind, and this blew directly in my face as I looked at the balloon. I believed that it would pass over the lawn.

I became very much interested, even excited, and the more so because I now perceived that it was a small balloon, entirely too small to sustain the weight of a man. If it had been an ordinary balloon with an occupant, it might have been interesting to hail him as he passed over my head ; but here was something that came floating out of the sky toward me, and which I might secure as a prize if I could follow it until it came to earth.

Nearer and nearer it approached, and I could plainly see the little basket which hung beneath the partly distended bag. The wild desire seized me to capture this air-ship. As I hastily considered my chances they did not appear encouraging. The wind, though light, was steady, and there was every reason to believe that the balloon would be carried across the river, and might not touch the earth until it had gone a long distance on the other side. If I crossed the river I might be able to keep up with the balloon ; but I suddenly remembered that this would be impossible, because my younger brother Richard had gone fishing in the boat. He had started to fly a kite I had made him, but the wind had not been strong enough, and he had taken to the water.

As I hurried down to the river I could not see or hear the boat, but by the wall at the bottom of the lawn I saw Richard's kite, and near by a basket in which he kept his fishing-tackle. A thought struck

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me. I ran down to the wall and turned over the basket and spread its contents on the ground. Among them I found three large fish-hooks which the youngster had used at the sea-shore. Then I sprang to the kite. The wind was fresher now. With all the nervous earnestness of a boy, I bound the three hooks, back to back and points downward, to the cord a few feet below the point where it was fastened to the kite, and then, the kite in one hand and the ball of cord in the other, I ran out into the open and looked up. Not far away, on the other side of the house, but still high above the tree-tops, I saw the balloon steadily moving toward me. It would certainly cross the river—it might sail on for hours. I set the kite against the wind, I tossed it up, I ran. In a few seconds it caught the breeze, steadied itself, and began to rise. On I ran toward the house, and higher and higher rose the kite. If I could only get it high enough, if I could hook it on to that balloon, I should be as happy as a deer-stalker who brings down a stag.

The kite went up grandly, high over the river, higher and higher, and I ran this way and that to bring it in line with the balloon. I let out more cord. The kite, like a hawk, was now soaring far above its quarry. If I could bring the cord against the balloon, if those hooks would catch, if they would take such good hold of some of the netting or of the basket so that I might pull it down! In my excitement, and with my eyes ever aloft, I fell over a little bush; but it did not matter. I was up in an instant, and the kite made but a few flaps before I had it steady again.

The balloon had now passed over my head and was

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not far from the cord. I ran a few steps to the right and then pulled down. The cord almost touched it. I pulled down harder. I could feel a little thump upon the cord, and then the balloon moved gently away from the kite.

I let out more cord and ran toward the river. The kite rose again. I pulled it down. With eyes fixed as though I were aiming a rifle, I moved the cord so that it might again touch the balloon. It did touch. I pulled it sharply. The hooks caught in the netting over the bag and held! What a bound my heart gave! Had I been my young brother I could not have breathed more triumphantly.

But I had not yet secured my prize. The cord, though light, was a strong one, but there was now a great strain upon it. Although the balloon was small, with the bag but partly filled with gas, it presented a considerable surface to the wind, and I soon began to fear that the cord would break before I could pull down both the balloon and the kite; but in a moment I saw that the bag was collapsing, and the strain upon the cord was becoming much less. I could easily imagine what had happened. One or more of the hooks had torn the silk of the balloon, and as gas escaped through the rent it was falling by its own weight.

Down, down it came, pulling the kite with it, and all I had to do was to draw in the cord and direct my descending prize toward an open spot where it would not catch on the boughs of trees.

Still down it came, and as if I had pulled in an aerial fish, I soon beheld the whole affair lying on the grass at my feet.

For a moment I stood and gazed; but in the whole

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jumbled mass I paid attention to nothing but a small basket with a piece of waterproof cloth tied over the top. I approached it, and then I stopped to consider. I felt a strong desire to inspect the secret of that basket alone. Fortunately my mother and father were away and my sister had gone to visit some neighbors. Richard was boating, but he might return at any moment. I jerked out my knife and cut the basket loose from the cords, and then, taking it under my arm, I ran to the house and up-stairs to my room, where I locked myself in.

With trembling hands and eager curiosity I removed the cover from the basket. The first thing I saw was a small cage containing a pigeon. I took this out and set it on the floor, the bird cooing and turning itself around as if it were glad to see a human being. Then I perceived a wooden framework, in which were set some instruments—thermometers, barometers, and I do not know what. On the top of this was attached a stout envelope on which was written :

“To the person who finds this balloon.”

It took me but a few seconds to release the envelope. It was not sealed, and I opened it and drew out a letter. This surprised me. As soon as I had noticed the instruments securely fastened to the framework, I had suspected that this balloon had been sent up by some scientific person and that the envelope contained technical directions to the finder. But here was a letter on two sheets of cream-colored note-paper, and evidently written by a lady. I glanced at the end of it; it had no signature; and then, still seated on the floor, I read :

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“Whoever you may be who shall find this letter, I beg and implore you to read it carefully, and then to do what you can to assist a fellow-being who can ask no one in the world but yourself to help her. I cannot write everything in this letter, but I will put in all that I can. I am an unfortunate girl who is suffering great misery, and who is cut off from all the world by a cruelty which would take a long time to describe. All I can say here is that my uncle, who has been appointed my guardian and the trustee of my property, has kept me for months and months and months as a close prisoner. I never go off the premises, and I never see anybody but him and one or two servants; I am not allowed to send any letters that are not first examined by him; and my situation is getting to be more dreadful every day.

“It cannot be long before I shall go crazy. I have tried ever so many ways of getting news of my situation to somebody in the outside world, but I have failed; and now I try this, which is my last chance. My uncle is a very learned man and is always making experiments. He sends up balloons with instruments in them, which register heat and cold and height, and all sorts of things. He always puts in his balloon a letter to the person who shall find it when it comes down, asking that person to look at the instruments and set down whatever they register. He also tells him to take out the pigeon which is in the cage and remove from its wing a roll of very thin paper. Then he asks that the registrations be written on this paper, and that it shall be tied on the pigeon’s wing just as it was before; after which the pigeon is to be set at liberty, when it will immediately fly back to him. He also sends his address, and requests that a letter be written to him, giving all sorts of information on a printed form which he encloses. But he wants the pigeon sent first, because the balloon may come down at some place which is very far from a post-office.

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" My plan is this—and if you get this letter you will know that it has succeeded: He sends up his balloons from a courtyard which is under my window, and one of the first things he does is to tie his letter to the instrument frame, and the last thing he does is to go and get the pigeon. While he is away doing this I shall slip down to the court, take out his letter and put in mine, and then pray that it may go to some good soul who will help me.

" What I want you to do is this: First make up your mind whether or not you are willing to help a poor unfortunate girl, shut off from all other help by a sky above her which she cannot reach, an earth below her which she cannot penetrate, and walls all about her which she cannot get through. If you are willing to do what you can for me, please take the paper from the pigeon's wing and write your name and address upon it, and then tie it on as it was before. But if you are not willing to help me, and do not wish to put yourself to trouble by meddling in the affairs of an utter stranger, please at least be kind enough not to write anything on the paper which might let my uncle know what I have done, but let the pigeon come back just as it is.

" I am almost sure it will come to me before he sees it, for I have fed this bird for a long time on the balcony under my window, and I shall watch for it by day and by night. But if my uncle should get it first he will see nothing but your address or the empty paper, and so he will not know what I have done. If I get the pigeon first and find your name on it, I will immediately write to you, asking you to send me some drawing material or something of that kind, and give my name and address. That sort of letter my uncle will let pass. I do not send my address now, because I am afraid to do so until I really know of some person who is willing I should send it.

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“Now, when you get my note, I implore you to come to the little town where I live and find out where my uncle’s house is. You can easily do this, for everybody knows him. Then please, I beg of you, try to see me. There is a large garden at the back of the house and a high wall all around it. After I hear from you I shall be there as much as I can. You cannot make a mistake, for I am the only young person in the house. Even if it should rain I will go out with a mackintosh. And now, without knowing who you are, I put my happiness, my fortune, and I may even say the possession of my senses into your charge, for I know if you will make my situation known to the proper persons I shall soon be free and happy.”

For a long time after I read this letter I sat on the floor holding it in my hand. What a message to come to me out of the clear August sky! How glad I was that nobody but myself had seen the balloon, and that I could sit here and consider the matter without interference! While thinking thus I was reminded that I was not alone, and that there was another party who had an interest in the proceedings. This was the pigeon, who began to coo louder and louder and to turn itself around with considerable vigor.

I laid down the letter and picked up the cage, and as I put my hand under it to raise it, so that I could better look at the pigeon’s wing, I felt that the bottom of the cage was very warm, and on examining it I found that the bottom was a double one, and contained a long bag of fine charcoal, which, on being lighted at one end, would burn for many hours, after the manner of the little Japanese stoves. This, no doubt, was to protect the pigeon against the extreme

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cold of high altitudes. The wicked uncle must indeed be an ingenious and practical man.

I did not look at the instruments. My mind was too much excited by the letter to allow me to examine their registrations. I was entirely occupied with the question, What shall I do for the writer of this letter? I could not believe it was a hoax, because no one wishing to play a joke would send up such a balloon with those expensive instruments.

I thought for a moment of waiting until some of the family returned, and taking counsel of them, but this idea I quickly rejected. If I were going to do anything I ought to do it now. If there really should be a young woman who needed help, she was waiting and watching for the return of that pigeon. If it should prove to be nothing but a joke, I would rather be laughed at for doing what I thought was a good action than to have my conscience reproach me for being a coward, afraid of being laughed at.

Now that my decision was made, I drew the pigeon from the cage, took off the paper, noticing how it was rolled and tied, wrote on it my name and address, attached it again to the wing of the bird, and then, going to the window, threw the pigeon into the air. For a few minutes it flew round and round, then it mounted high and disappeared over the tops of the trees.

“It has gone to her,” I said, and I sat down and read the letter over again.

Suddenly I thought of the balloon on the grass. Why should any one know of this thing but myself—at least, until I chose to make it known? I ran down to the lawn and disengaged the kite, and then, rolling

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up the balloon-bag with its netting, I carried it to a corner of the grounds and concealed it under a heavy hedge. Then I took Richard's kite to the river-wall, and restored all his possessions to the condition in which I had found them.

Now, all traces of my messenger from the sky having been removed and my answer to the message having been despatched, I sat upon the wall to think more about it, and while doing so my mind became deeply, and I may say not altogether pleasantly, impressed by the remembrance that I was engaged to be married. This, of course, had never been anything but a most delightful remembrance, but just now it did not seem to fit into the condition of things. Perhaps I ought to have remembered it sooner.

What would Clara Markham think of my offering to become a knight-errant for the benefit of another young lady? That this lady's name and habitation were unknown would make no difference, and if it should prove that no such lady existed it would still make no difference, for I had assumed her to be a real person, suffering real hardships, and had, in fact, offered myself as her protector. The more I thought of Clara Markham in connection with what I had done, the more my thoughts troubled me. One thing was clear to me: I had no right to keep this affair a secret from her. So, that afternoon, I rode over to her father's house, about two miles distant, and being fortunate enough to find Clara at home, I conducted her to a secluded spot on the ground, and there I astonished her as I think she was never astonished before. With her eyes very wide open, she sat and looked at me.

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"If anybody but you, Tom," she exclaimed, "had told me this, I would not have believed it! I would not have believed there had been any balloon, any pigeon, any letter. But what you tell me I believe, no matter what it is."

To this I replied properly, and added that I expected her always to do so.

"But there is one thing I do not believe," she went on to say, "and that is that there is any young lady at all in the matter, or if there is, that she is in trouble and needs assistance. I think it is all a hoax, and we need not consider it or talk about it any more."

"But, my dear girl," said I, "I have sent my name to the writer of that letter, and in so doing I have given her a promise that I will help her. Of course it all may be a hoax, but suppose it is not, would you like to think that I had positively declined to help a fellow-being in distress? Would you like to consider me that sort of a man?"

"Of course not," said Clara. "If she is a real person and needs help she ought to be helped, but there are other people besides you who can do it."

"Who, for instance?" I asked.

"There is my cousin Charles," she said.

Now, above all people in this world I hated that cousin Charles. He was in the habit of mingling with the Markham family as if he belonged to it, and I had often been jealous of him in regard to Clara; and now it seemed as if I were even more jealous of him in regard to this unknown girl, to whom, perhaps, the pigeon had even now carried my message.

"No," said I, a little too decidedly perchance, "your cousin would not do. I have sent my name in good

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faith, and whatever happens I shall act in a straightforward and honest way, telling you everything that I do and taking your advice about it. But your cousin would either make fun of the whole affair or else—anyway, it would, in fact, be a breach of confidence for me to pass over the management of this affair to any one else until the writer of that letter should authorize me to do so. I found the balloon. I am the person to whom she wrote ; that is to say,—here a happy thought struck me,—“you and I are the persons to whom she wrote, and it is to us that she appeals for help. Now, are we going to throw her over even before we know who she is?”

At this Clara's countenance began to clear a little.

“That is true,” she said. “You and I are the persons who have this case in our hands.”

“And whatever happens we will keep the whole matter a secret between ourselves,” I said.

It was three days after this conversation that, walking on the lawn, I saw our man bringing the mail-bag from the post-office. As had happened on the two preceding mornings, I met him at the gate and looked into the bag to see if there were any letters for me. This morning there were several letters addressed to me, and among them one in the handwriting of the balloon lady. I put this in my pocket, and tore open the others ; but I am sure I did not know then, nor have I ever since known, what was in them. I went to my room and opened my letter. As I did so I said to myself that I ought not to be so interested in this correspondence. But I was interested—so much so that I cut my finger with the knife with which I opened the envelope.

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The following is an exact copy of the note I read :

“August 17, 1891.

“*Mr. Thomas W. Grant.*

“DEAR SIR: Having seen your advertisement of music for the guitar, I beg you will send me the pieces Nos. 39, 102, and 68. I enclose a postal note for the amount, ninety-five cents.

“Yours truly,

“*GRACE SOMERVILLE ROSLEY,*

“*Care of George R. Rosley, Esq.,*

“*Wolverton, Hunterdon County,*

“*New Jersey.”*

“Well, well!” said I, “she is as practical-minded as her uncle. Think of her putting in that postal note! What a capital idea! The most suspicious person would never imagine that this letter had been sent to one whom she had called upon to act as her protector, her knight-errant. Of course the pigeon went to her first, for had her uncle received my address there would have been no reason for his giving it to her. Everything has gone well, and now what am I to do?”

As I asked myself this question my conscience again reproached me for taking so much interest in the matter; but I turned severely on my conscience and asked it, in turn, if it were not possible for a man to truly love one woman and yet feel desirous of helping another woman in sore distress? If these two things were incompatible, no man should love. At this, I am happy to say, my conscience was completely humbled and said no more.

But when I took the note I had received, to Clara, she said a great deal. She took much interest in the matter—even more, I thought, than I did, and, in my opinion, entirely too much.

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“I believe,” said she, “that the writer of this is a person accustomed to deception. I do not see how she could bring herself to say she had seen your advertisement, and then to send you money! It is a positive insult! How much better it would have been if she had written plainly and honestly what she had to say, without all these tricks.”

With a sigh at the obtuseness of the female intellect, I explained to Clara that if Miss Rosley had written a plain, straightforward letter her uncle would not have allowed her to send it. Nothing but a simple business note like this would have passed his suspicious scrutiny. The enclosing of the postal note was—I was about to say “a stroke of genius,” but I changed this expression to “the most prudent thing possible.”

“When a person is a prisoner and guarded with cruel watchfulness,” I said, “subterfuges are necessary and right. Would you hesitate, if you were cruelly imprisoned, and wished to communicate with me, to resort to a subterfuge?”

“I do not believe in such imprisonments in this enlightened age, and in this country,” said she. “It is nonsense to suppose that there are such things.”

“It does seem so,” I answered, “but everything is possible, and supposing that this young lady’s story should be true, how can we reconcile it to our consciences if we totally disregard her second appeal to us for help?”

Clara did not immediately answer. Her mind seemed disturbed.

“Of course she ought to be helped,” she said, “but you are not the person to do it. Why couldn’t I go to her and hear what she has to say?”

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“You!” said I. “Impossible! Wolverton is a long way from here, and, besides, you could not go about alone asking for Mr. Rosley’s house, and even manage to get an undisturbed interview with his niece.”

“I would rather do that than have you do it,” she said. “But it is not necessary for me to go alone. Cousin Charles could go with me.”

“If your cousin goes,” said I, a little sharply, for this remark annoyed me very much, “he would better go by himself. But I do not want him to have anything to do with it. This is my affair.”

“And mine,” said she.

“Yes,” I assented, “it is ours. But,” I added, “although I came to you with it and laid the whole thing before you exactly as I knew it myself, trusting you as I always do in everything, you do not seem to be in the least willing to trust me.”

At this Clara’s eyes became a little dim. “Tom,” she said, putting her hand on my arm, “you have no right to say that.” And then for ten minutes our conversation became strictly personal. When this interchange of sentiments had been satisfactorily concluded, Clara suddenly exclaimed :

“Tell me, Tom, what it is that you think you ought to do. Have you thought of any plan?”

“It is all as simple as can be,” I answered. “There is no plan but one. I will go to Wolverton and find out where Mr. Rosley’s house is. Then I will walk toward it and around the back of it, on some elevated ground where I can look over the wall, for, of course, if there were not such a place she could not expect any one to see her in the garden, and then if I see a young lady I will approach the garden and speak to her,

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probably through a grated gate. I will ask her to tell me her story as quickly as possible, and, after making some inquiries in the village by which, without exciting suspicion, I can find out something about the Rosley family, I will return to you and tell you all about it. Then we can decide whether or not we ought to inform the legal authorities or her distant friends, if she has any, of the state of her case, or let the whole thing drop."

"You must have been thinking a great deal about it," she said quickly, "to have such a plan as that so pat and ready to carry out. But I am not going to find fault with you. I know you have one of the quickest of minds. Of course your plan is the proper one, and I would approve of it in every way if it were Mr. Rosley's nephew who was imprisoned ; but a young girl in a sequestered garden—that is dreadfully different!"

I replied loftily : "To me she would be simply a human being—her sex, her age, her appearance would be nothing to me. I would consider only her sufferings, and would not even consider my ability to relieve her. I would consult you about that."

"Tom," said Clara, "I do not suppose that I really can go to talk to that girl, which is what I want to do ; but do you think that you could go to her as I would, feeling all the time that you were filling my place, and that you could speak to her, and listen to her, as one woman to another?"

I did not hesitate a moment. "Clara," I exclaimed, "I believe that I could!"

"Then, Tom," said the noble girl, "you can go."

There was no chance to say or do more, for we saw persons approaching from the house.

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The next morning I took an early train for Wolverton. I determined to be very cautious about this business, and if I should find there was no Mr. Rosley, and consequently no young lady in a garden, I would quietly return without giving any one a chance to make fun of me.

Wolverton was a small village, and as I took some refreshments at the inn I asked some very natural questions of the innkeeper about the village and some of its principal residents.

I was disappointed that he did not mention the only name I cared to hear, but on my remarking that I had heard a scientific gentleman lived in the place, he answered :

“Oh, you must mean Mr. Rosley. But he doesn’t live in the village. His house is about a mile out.”

“In what direction?” I asked carelessly. And while the innkeeper was giving me the information I endeavored to suppress the excitement caused by the knowledge that I was really on the right track.

As soon as I could decently leave, I paid my little bill and sauntered out. I knew the man took me for a book-agent, but I was very well satisfied that he should do so.

The Rosley place was an old-fashioned one. The house faced the main road, but stood well back from it, and a narrow lane, at right angles with the main road, passed the house at no great distance; as I walked along this lane I could see through a bushy hedge a courtyard, lying in an angle of the mansion.

“That is the place where he sends up his balloons,” I said to myself. “Her window must look out on it.”

Passing still farther on, my heart fairly bounded

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when I perceived behind the house the high wall of a garden.

As I passed the long side wall I saw that it had no gate nor opening, and when I reached the end of it I found that the garden backed upon a field planted with corn. On the outside of the back wall was a row of cedar-trees.

Looking about me and finding that no one was in sight, I got into the corn-field and approached the garden. I passed along the whole of the back wall but found no door nor grating. I peeped around the corner to the other side and saw there was a door there, but it was of solid plank and too near the house. When my unknown correspondent wrote to me that I would see her in the garden, it evidently had not entered her head to inform me how I should see her. The neighboring elevation from which I had imagined I might look down into the garden did not exist, and the only way in which I could see into it was to look over the back wall, where I would myself be protected from observation. This would not be difficult if I could manage to climb into one of the cedar-trees which stood on the outer side of the wall.

The position in which I found myself while I was quietly surveying Mr. Rosley's walled garden, with the intention of getting into it if I could do so, was not altogether satisfactory. I felt as if I were engaged in a sly and underhand business. Clandestine methods are allowable in war and love, but I was not engaged in either of these pursuits; besides, I was endeavoring to speak to a young lady as a woman would speak to her. Would a woman have climbed into a tree to talk with her?

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However, I could not burden my mind with such casuistries. I had come to do a thing, and I must do it.

I quietly climbed into a tree and very cautiously projected my head above the wall. I looked into a garden with flower-beds, paths bordered with high rows of box, masses of shrubbery here and there, and a heavily shaded arbor; but I saw no human being. Some of the branches of the tree in which I was standing rested on the top of the wall, so that I looked through them without danger of being seen. I looked and I looked and I looked, but there was nothing I cared to see, and my heart grew heavier and heavier. At one time I thought of going boldly to the front door and asking for Miss Rosley. I might thus at least find out if such a person existed, and if this were so I might even manage, in the presence of witnesses, to talk to her about the music she had ordered, and thus let her know who I was.

Suddenly, and with such startling effect that I almost slipped out of the tree, there appeared before me an apparition. It was that of a young lady dressed in white, and she came out of the summer-house. She held a book in her hand, and with sparkling eyes and lips half open she stepped rapidly toward me. Stopping a little distance from the wall, she said :

“Is that Mr. Thomas—? If so, what is the rest of your name?”

I could scarcely answer, so surprised was I. The girl was beautiful. I do not believe I ever saw such eyes. Clara’s are dark.

“W. Grant,” said I.

A smile of delight spread over her face. She was

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not tall, but her movements and expressions had a charm in them which seemed entirely novel to me.

“Oh, I am so glad !” she said. “I had not the least idea there was anybody here until I happened to look up from my book and saw those branches moving. Then I noticed your hat. How good of you to come ! Do you think you can reach this ?” Then, dropping her book on the ground, she took from her pocket a letter and held it up to me. “That is a full account of me, with all things which I wish to have known. I give it to you now because if any one should come before I have time to talk to you, you will not have to go away without knowing everything.”

I leaned over the wall, stretched down my arm, and took the letter.

“Then I may talk to you ?” I said.

“Oh, yes,” she answered. “There are a good many things I want to ask you. If I had something to stand on it would be better.” And she looked about her.

“Oh, you need not trouble yourself to stand on anything,” said I, visions of toppling boxes or barrels coming into my mind. “May I not get over the wall and speak with you on the ground ?”

“That would be better,” she said, “but I am so afraid that if any one should come you could not get back again.”

I glanced along the inner side of the wall. Not far away there was a low pear-tree, and from a crotch of this I saw I could readily reach the coping.

“I can get back again easily enough,” said I, and in a moment I was standing by her side.

“Let us step into the arbor,” she said. “It is possible that we may be seen here from the house.”

I followed her quick steps toward the arbor.

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"Now let us sit down here," said she, "and do not speak very loud. I am dreadfully anxious to ask you some things, and, besides, I can tell you what is in that letter a great deal better than I have written it. But first of all I want to ask you some questions. Have you a sister?"

"Yes."

"What is her name?"

"Margaret."

"Oh, and is your mother living, and what was her name before she was married?"

"Margaret also—Margaret Carson."

She clasped her little hands in her lap, and turned herself slowly toward me.

"Then you are not the person," said she.

"What person?" I asked in consternation.

"When my father was living," she said, "he had a partner who was his great friend, and although I am not positively and certainly sure that his name was the same as yours, I know it was Grant, and I think it was Thomas W. He is dead, but I know he had a son whose name was Thomas, and I thought there was no reason why he should not be living at the address you sent me. But I know his sister and his mother, and her maiden name was Stanfield, and neither of them is named Margaret. Ever since I have been in trouble I have so longed to know where the Grants lived, and when I took your address from the pigeon's wing I could have screamed with delight. But, after all, you are not the person."

Did this mean that I was to get up and retire over the garden wall? I could not act on such a supposition.

"I do not know any Grants who married Stanfields,"

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said I, speaking very earnestly, "but I assure you, Miss Rosley, that that does not make the least difference in the world. You want help, and I am here. Tell me what it is that I can do for you, and it shall be done just the same as if I were the son of your father's friend. I judged from the letter that I found in the balloon that you were in great trouble. Now, I am a lawyer ; tell me everything, and it may be I can help you as well as any one else. Your appeal for help came to me floating out of the sky, and it made a great impression upon me. I felt that such a call as that must not be disregarded. I came to you just as soon as it was possible, and now I do not want you to send me away without allowing me to do what I can for you."

"How glad I am you are a lawyer !" she said, the light again shining in her eyes. "A lawyer ought to know exactly what to do, and it was wonderfully kind of you to take so much trouble for an absolute stranger. And now I will begin at the beginning and tell you everything as quickly as I can."

The story she told did not surprise me. In fact, I had guessed the drift of it. She was an orphan, and had reason to believe that her uncle, who was her guardian, and who of late years had become very eccentric, had spent a great part, or perhaps all, of her fortune in his expensive experiments, and since she had left school and was of age he had been very suspicious and watchful of her, refusing her permission to travel or visit her friends, and lately had actually instituted a system of espionage on all her correspondence. There was no doubt that he was afraid she would write something or say something

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that would cause an investigation of her affairs before he had finished a great scientific work on which he was engaged, and from which, as he informed her almost every day, he expected to derive great profit as well as reputation.

Miss Rosley's affection for her uncle, whose mind was probably unsettled, had prevented her from appealing to the neighbors, by whom the old gentleman was evidently much disliked, and who had already talked about the strictness with which he treated his niece, although they did not know the extent of his vigilance. Such an appeal, my companion said, would probably have resulted in his being sent to a lunatic asylum or a prison, and she had, therefore, confined herself to efforts to open a correspondence with the outside world. If she could not in this way bring her case to the knowledge of friends, she might, at least, obtain the assistance of an unprejudiced and dispassionate lawyer, who, without making her uncle the subject of public scandal, would quietly obtain for her an allowance sufficient for her support, and let her uncle keep the rest. Thus, under legal protection, she would get out into the world and seek her friends, leaving her uncle to go on with his experiments and expenses without fear of disturbance from her. If he could be sure that he were in no danger of an investigation of his guardianship, he would be quite willing, she believed, to let her go wherever she chose.

I did not interrupt her story. It was told with great directness and clearness, owing, no doubt, to her having previously written it.

"Now," said she, when she had finished, "you are a lawyer. Will you take my case? Will you advise me?"

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“Most gladly will I do that,” I said. “I will take counsel of the heads of the law firm with which I am connected. I will manage the matter in the quietest and most private way, mentioning no names until it is necessary. You may suppose that I have not had experience enough to conduct an affair which demands such delicacy, prudence, and knowledge, but I assure you that the firm of Roundman, Bostwick & Unger stands in the highest rank of the profession. I will remember all that you have told me, and I will carefully study the paper you have given me. I will find the family of your father’s partner. I will put you into communication with them, for I can manage a correspondence for you. In fact, I will attend to anything you wish.”

“That is very good of you,” she said. “I believe that lawyers are as kind as doctors. When I succeeded in getting my letter into the balloon, I really had great hopes that something would come of it, but I did not believe I would so soon have the chance of speaking to a lawyer and putting my affairs into his hands. I think it is wonderful.”

“I consider it one of the lucky chances of my life,” said I, “that I happened to be the one who discovered that balloon.”

“It was a happy thing for me,” she said, “for you came so quickly. Now there is something I have just thought of. Wouldn’t it be well, before you do anything else, to find out where the Grants live—I mean my Grants? Then, if, when my uncle first hears from you or your firm, he should become excited and angry, so that I should be afraid of him,—and there have been times when I have been a little afraid of

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him,—I might quietly escape from this place and go to the Grants?"

This proposition alarmed me. "My dear young lady," I replied, "if you suspect any such danger as that we must all be very careful. In no event must you try to get away from here without assistance. Any attempt of the kind would be extremely hazardous, for your uncle will be extraordinarily watchful, and in his state of mind there is no knowing what might happen. And in any case you must not travel by yourself. Don't think of doing anything of the sort without my knowing it. It may be well for me to stay near you after negotiations have been opened with your uncle. I can take lodgings in the village, and we can arrange signals, so that if you think you ought to leave this house I shall be ready to take you wherever you want to go. If your Grants are too far away I will take you to my Grants. My mother and sister will be glad to receive you."

"How good you are!" she said, and held out her hand. I took it and did not immediately release it. I think she supposed this was because I wished to take leave of her.

"Good-by," she said, as she gently withdrew her hand, "good-by. I shall think of other things to say to you, of course, but I ought not to keep you any longer, and somebody might come out before you could get over the wall."

I did not want to go. I was not at that moment afraid of any one. I was sure I had not thought of all the things I ought to say. Happily one of these things now came to me.

"I will tell you what you ought to do," I said.

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“You should write a letter to your Grants ; then I can give it to them if I see them, or send it to them even if they are in California or abroad. Now is your chance to communicate with your friends.”

“But I cannot write a letter before you go,” said she.

“Oh, I will leave you and come back again this afternoon. Then you can give me the letter.”

“I shall not say anything more about your kindness,” said she, “because there is so much of it. About three o’clock will be a good time, and do not show yourself unless you see me.”

She raised a little watch that was dangling at her belt, and looked at it.

“Dear me !” she exclaimed, “it is after one o’clock. I had not the least idea it was so late.”

She rose, and as I perceived that she wanted to see me safely off before she went to the house, I assured her that I would be back at three, and jumping into the pear-tree, easily cleared the wall.

I went back to the inn for my luncheon.

“Did you see all the people I told you the names of ?” said my host.

“No,” said I, “but I shall stay here for the rest of the day.”

“You didn’t get out to old Rosley’s, I suppose,” he continued. “But it wouldn’t be much use, unless you’ve got books about balloons or stars.”

“I may get out there this afternoon,” said I, thinking it well to divert suspicion if my course should be noticed.

At about a quarter before three I was in the cedar-tree looking over the garden wall. It was a long

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time before I saw her coming, and then in a moment I was in the garden. She hurried toward me.

"It wasn't necessary to get over the wall," she said. "I am so afraid you will be seen. I thought you would reach down and take the letter. But now that you are here, please come into the arbor. You cannot be seen from the house there. Here is a letter to Mrs. Grant. Perhaps you would like to look over it. I shall have to ask you to hurry, for my uncle is in a very bad way to-day. He was angry because I was two minutes late to lunch, and he may send for me or come for me at any minute. He was greatly disturbed when he found his pigeon without anything on its wing, and has since been expecting a letter from the finder, and as none has come he is very cross and out of humor with all the world."

I had no time to waste in reading her letter. I glanced over it and told her that no doubt she had stated everything correctly, and that I would see that it reached Mrs. Grant if she were alive. Then I stood and looked down on that beautiful young face, not happy, as it had been in the morning, but troubled and anxious. I could not bear to go away and leave her with this half-crazy and selfish old man. It was not safe, it was not right, that she should be here. Earnestly and quickly I told her what I thought.

She looked up at me with tears in her eyes, and seemed about to speak, when suddenly she started.

"Hark!" said she, "I think my uncle is calling me. Yes, he is."

At this instant there came a loud call, or rather shout, from the house. She turned pale.

"It is not like him to do that. I must run," she

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said, "or he will be here. Let me go, and then hurry away as fast as you can."

I had seized her by the arm to detain her an instant. "I shall not go," I said quickly. "I shall stay behind the garden wall until I know you are not in danger. When you have a chance, come out and let me know. I shall be there."

She raised her eyes to mine without a word, and then she fled.

I sat on the ground at the back of the wall, listening. The place was so secluded that if no one came into the corn-field,—and there was no agricultural reason why anyone should do so at this time of the year,—I might have camped there for a week. I was afraid to stand in a tree, for fear I might move the branches, but from where I was I thought I could hear the lightest footstep or the faintest call. After a time I took out my watch and looked at it. It was nearly four o'clock. Almost immediately after that a little gravel stone came over the wall and fell down near me. Instantly I was in the tree, looking over the wall. She stood almost beneath me.

"Hush!" she whispered. "Do not get over the wall nor speak. I heard the click of your watch and knew you must be there. Get down again and wait, please."

I obeyed her implicitly. I did not even hesitate long enough to see what she did.

I do not know how long I waited, but suddenly I was startled by footsteps on the outside of the wall, and looking around, I saw Miss Rosley approaching me. Her face was pale as she put her finger on her lips.

"I will go through the corn," she whispered, "to

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the end of the field. Meet me there." And without another word she disappeared between two rows of tall, waving green blades.

For a moment I stood, not knowing what to do. It was plain she did not wish me to follow her, and as I did not know the extent or conformation of the corn-field, I thought it best to go out to the lane and so keep on a parallel course with her. The corn-field was a large one, and when I came to the end of it I found a piece of wooded land with a little stream running under the trees. I got over a rough stone wall, and pushed my way through the underbrush and ferns to the spot which I supposed was as far from the lane as the point where Miss Rosley entered the field.

I had not misjudged the distance. Soon I saw a speck of white, and then her two hands pushing aside the bending leaves. I pulled down the bars of a low rail fence in front of me and hurried to meet her. Her face was flushed.

"Are you not tired?" I whispered.

"Oh, you can speak out now," she said. "I am tired, for it was so rough."

I assisted her to a low rock near the stream, and there we sat down. She took off her hat and fanned herself.

"As soon as I get my breath," she said, "I will tell you about everything."

I was content to wait as long as she pleased, but she soon began :

"I found my uncle in a perfect fury," she said. "He has noticed that the pigeon he put in the balloon is in the habit of coming to my balcony. He suspects

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me of taking the paper from its wing. And, more than that, he thinks that in some way I have obtained possession of the letter from the person who found the balloon, and that I intend to make some use of it. I tried to quiet him in every way that I could, but it was of no use. Presently he shook his great, long finger at me and said : 'I have made up my mind to wait for the letter until this afternoon's mail comes in, and no longer. You can go to the post-office and get me that letter. I want you to go, and nobody else. You are the best person to go after it.' I knew very well what he meant by that. He thought I had the letter, and that this would give me a chance to produce it. It seems strange that he should let me go to the post-office alone, but his mind must have been greatly upset, and, besides, I don't believe he thought there was any need of my going. As soon as I could, I went into the garden to see if you were still there, and then I put on my hat and went out. If he saw me he might think I was going to the post-office, although the mail does not come in until six o'clock. And now," her eyes filling with tears as she spoke, "I cannot go back. I would not dare to go back to the house without the letter. I think he is entirely crazy. I have not a thing with me," she went on to say, "except my gloves and my hat. I can go to stay with some of the village people, but they are so near my uncle's house."

I took one of her hands in both of mine. "My dear young lady," I said, "you go to none of them. They would drive you crazy with their questions. They could not help you in the least. I will take you to a place of safety."

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“How?” asked she.

I could not instantly formulate my intentions, for the situation had been very suddenly thrust upon me. It was a strange one, and required consideration. She waited a few moments for me to speak, withdrawing her hand the while.

“I will tell you,” she said, “what I thought when I came out here. I thought that I would go back to my school at Stamford, which I left more than a year ago. It is vacation now, but one of the ladies always stays there, and it is the only place I have to go to. I would be afraid to take a train at the village, because some one might see me and interfere with me; but there is a station about two miles below, where I would not be likely to meet any one who knows me. My great difficulty is that I have not any money. I do not mind not having any clothes or things, for Miss Humphreys can give me what I really need; but I must buy my ticket, and I thought perhaps you would lend me the money.”

“Oh, that is all right,” said I; “you need not trouble yourself about money; but Stamford is a long way from here, and you are not prepared for travel.” And as I spoke I looked at her thin white dress. “You can do much better than that. Let me take you to my own home. It is not so far, and my mother and sister will be glad to welcome and take care of you. There you can wait until you hear from your Mrs. Grant, or you can write to your teacher, or do what you please.”

“You are very generous and good,” she said, “but I could not do that. Your mother does not know me, and, in fact, you do not know me. What would she

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think were you to take me to her? No, I must go to some one who knows me—to my school. You may wonder that I have never written to my teachers, but there were reasons why I could not. For a long time they have been very severe upon my uncle. I know he owes them money, and he has treated them very rudely. If I had written to them one of them would have come here, and there would have been great trouble. And until this day I never thought of running away and going to them. But now I must do it. I can walk to Stillwell, and a train leaves there about ten minutes before six, so there is plenty of time. As you are so kind as to let me have the money for my fare, I am sure I can easily get to Stamford."

I saw that her scheme was better than mine. Her words had called up in my mind a picture of my mother and sister when I presented myself before them and requested them to open their arms to a strange young woman, very beautiful, but without baggage, which was a truer picture than the one my generosity had at first evoked.

"Since you wish it," I said, "you shall go to Stamford. But you cannot go alone, and I shall go with you. You will have to leave this train at the ferry. You must cross to New York and take another train, and it will be dark before you get to the end of your journey. No, do not say a word against it. You are under my wing, and I shall keep you there until I give you to your friends, so that is settled. You say I do not know you, but I am determined you shall know me, and know that I am not the kind of a man to let you go off alone to Stamford at this time of day."

She looked up at me with a smile.

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“Are all lawyers as kind-hearted and thoughtful as you are?” she said.

“It depends on the lawyer,” I answered, and then in a moment added, “and also upon the client. And now, shall we walk on to Stillwell?”

She rose without a word, and together we went out of the woods into the green and shaded lane.

That walk to Stillwell was a charming one. The afternoon sky, the summer air, and the gentle confidences of my companion harmonized like the colors of a tapestry.

But as we approached Stillwell there was a change in the mood of Miss Rosley. To the sense of peaceful relief arising from the feeling that she was safe and being cared for, there succeeded a very natural sadness when she thought that she was thus leaving her only home and her only relative, and one who formerly had been so kind to her. As she spoke of this tears began to roll down her cheeks. I said everything I could to comfort and cheer her, and among other things I suggested that she write to her uncle and let him know where she was going. He would not disturb her there. She readily agreed to this, and as there was plenty of time, she sat down on a stone by the roadside, and with my pencil and on a page from my note-book she wrote to him, and when we reached the station I procured an envelope and mailed it there.

I had a great deal to do to console that young creature and to keep her from crying during the long and varied journey, but I succeeded fairly well. When we reached New York I found we had an hour and a half to wait. We dined at a restaurant, and leaving

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her there to finish her dessert, I went out and bought her a jacket, for the air was growing very cool. When I brought this to her, her eyes sparkled with delight and surprise.

"I believe you are a good fairy," she said. "I was shivering when I came in here, and was just wondering how I could go out into the night air with nothing but this thin dress. And how in the world did you know this would fit me?"

"Do you think my eyes so poor," I asked, "that by this time they are not able to measure you?"

"I did not know," she said, as we went out, "that lawyers had such good eyes."

It was after nine o'clock when we reached the school of the Misses Humphreys, and the elder sister, who at the time had the house nearly to herself, was just about to go to her chamber when we arrived. I shall never forget the surprise of that rather more than middle-aged lady when she beheld her former pupil and myself. She took Miss Rosley to her arms, and when the natural agitation of that young lady had subsided I was introduced, and a very brief but direct explanation of her appearance was given.

"I thought you would have to leave him," said Miss Humphreys. "I knew you could not live there. But I never expected you to run away in this fashion. So this gentleman is your lawyer?" And as she spoke she scanned me very thoroughly through her spectacles.

I soon took my leave, promising to call in the morning for instructions from my client. I went to a hotel, and not until I reached it did I remember that I, as well as Miss Rosley, was unencumbered with baggage.

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The next morning I presented myself at the Misses Humphreys' school. I had first an interview with the old lady.

"Miss Rosley has told me her story," she said, "balloon and everything, and I must say the affair is entirely different from the circumstances by which we are ordinarily surrounded. She has also explained to me that, although you are apparently too young a man to have had much law experience, you are connected with a prominent legal firm of which I have heard. I hope, sir, that you will submit this business, with all its details, to their most careful consideration."

"Of course I shall do that," I said. "I would not think of acting in such a matter without the concurrence of the firm."

She smiled.

"I hope you may have their concurrence in every way," she said. "Miss Rosley has told me how extraordinarily kind and thoughtful you have been, and has stated that if you had known her all your lifetime, instead of part of a day, your conduct toward her could not have been more tender or sympathetic. I inferred, indeed—"

But she did not finish the sentence, for at this moment Miss Rosley entered the room. She wore a morning-gown a little too large for her, but she was quite as lovely as if it had fitted her. She greeted me warmly.

"I have come," I said, "to take my legal instructions."

We sat down on a sofa, and Miss Humphreys took a chair at the other end of the long room. She seemed

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to think that when a client was giving instructions to a lawyer the presence of a witness was necessary.

My instructions were very simple. If possible, I was to get an allowance for her which would support her, but in no event was I to do anything which would bring a scandal upon her uncle or cause his property to be sold. She had written again to him, telling him that he need fear nothing from her in this respect.

“A much too affectionate letter, I should say,” interpolated Miss Humphreys from the other end of the room.

When our business talk had been concluded Miss Rosley said to me, in a rather lower voice than that in which she had been speaking :

“I can never thank you enough for all you have done for me, but I shall—”

“Oh, do not speak of that,” said I. “Wait until I have done more. You do not know how glad I am to be able to serve you.”

There was an evident restlessness at the other end of the room, owing, perhaps, to an inability to catch words spoken in a low tone and at a considerable distance, which seemed to be a hint to speak louder or to bring the conversation to a close. Under the circumstances I thought the latter would be the best course.

“I must go now,” I said, “but as soon as anything definite is done in regard to this business I will inform you.”

“Oh, yes,” said she, “I shall be so glad to have you write and tell me everything.”

“Of course I can write,” I said, “but it would be better for me to come to you, wherever you may be,

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and report or consult. Which would you prefer?" I asked, daring to speak in quite a low tone. "Shall I write or come?"

She looked up at me as we stood together, and said: "Come."

I reached home that afternoon, and the next day I went to see Clara. I found her on fire to know what had happened. As clearly and concisely as I could, I put before her the events which had occurred since I saw her. She showed the greatest interest in every detail of my account; in fact, her manner indicated a craving for detail. When I had made what I thought was a good finish to my story, she said:

"Now, then, Tom, there is one thing I particularly want to know. When you were talking to this girl about our willingness to help her, and when you were doing all those things you did, did you always remember to speak to her as one woman to another?"

This question struck me dumb. I did not know what to say. A backward mental glance at the events of the past two days made it still harder to answer.

Then up stood Clara, her face somewhat pale.

"Now, be honest, Tom, did you?"

I looked straight into her eyes. "Of course I did not," I said. "I could not do it, and no man who is the right sort of a man could do it. But I spoke to her as a lawyer to his client. You must remember she is my first client."

Clara regarded me for a moment with a smile on her face — a very queer smile. "No, Tom," she said, "she is not your client at all. You know we were to act together in this matter, and as I know nothing of law we could not be her lawyers. There is my cousin

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Charles, who is a lawyer, and I know he would be very glad to take up this case."

"Your cousin!" I exclaimed with considerable excitement. "You do not suppose that he would speak with her as one woman to another!"

"In his case," said Clara, "it would not matter."

Of course I agreed to give up this my first case. It was reasonable that I should do so, and I did not argue about it. But it filled my soul with an active jealousy to think of that handsome cousin Charles taking charge of my client's affairs. Against this I argued, but my arguments were of no avail. Clara's cousin was a good lawyer. He was older than I; he had had experience and he had excellent partners; and the matter ended by my giving him a letter of introduction to Miss Rosley, and by putting in his hands her letter to Mrs. Grant, her fortunes, and her destinies.

I thought of writing an explanatory note to the young lady, but Clara believed this was needless. Her cousin could explain everything, and if a note from us should prove necessary, she and I could easily write one when the time came to do so. The time for a note from both of us did not arrive, but in about a week after I had parted with Miss Rosley at the Humphreys' school, and before Clara's cousin had communicated with her, I received a letter from her. That letter I carried unopened in my pocket for three days.

I could not bring myself to believe that it was likely to be a letter which should be read and answered conjointly by Clara and myself, nor could I prevail upon myself that under the circumstances I ought to read

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it alone. Of course it might be a very simple business note, but whenever I thought of it I seemed to hear a gentle, tender call for sympathy and help ; I seemed to see a pair of blue eyes dimmed with tears, and two little hands outstretched toward me. These fancies may have been but stuff and nonsense, but they made such an impression upon me that on the third day I burned that letter without reading it, and I never received another.

Two years have passed since my visit to Wolverton. I am married to Clara, and if I should be lying in a hammock and should see a speck in the blue summer sky, I should call her to come to look at it with me.

Clara's cousin Charles is soon to be married to Miss Rosley. He managed her affairs, I am told, as well as could be expected of him, and, although he did not get very much out of the business, he got quite as much as he deserved. I never heard—for I took particular pains not to hear—what Miss Rosley thought of her change of lawyers. Charles is not one of my intimates, and we never have any confidences.

What I have here told was recently recalled by Clara, who came to me with a piece of gray paper in her hand.

“I was looking for some stamps in your desk,” she said, “and I found this old postal note for ninety-five cents. I remember it very well. Shall I return it to Grace Rosley, and write on the back of it, ‘As one woman to another’? I really think she ought to have it.”

I took it from her. “No,” said I, “I think I shall keep it. But if you want to put anything on it you can write :

“ ‘A man’s a man for a’ that.’ ”

OUR FIRE-SCREEN

OUR FIRE-SCREEN

IT was a fire-screen,—that is, it was a frame for one,—and it was made of ash. My wife had worked a very pretty square of silk, with flowers and other colored objects upon it, and when it was finished she thought she would use it for a fire-screen, and asked me to have a frame made for it. I ordered the frame of ash, because the cabinet-maker said that that was the fashionable wood at present. And when it came home my wife and I both liked it very much, although we could not help thinking it ought to be painted. It was well made—you could see the construction everywhere. One part ran through another part, and the ends were fastened with pegs. It was modelled, so the cabinet-maker informed me, in the regular Eastlake style.

It was a pretty frame, but the wood was of too light a color. It stared out at us from the midst of the other furniture. Of course it might be stained, and so made to harmonize with the rest of our sitting-room; but what would be the good of having it of ash if it were painted over? It might as well be of pine.

However, at my wife's suggestion, I got a couple of Eastlake chairs, also ash, and with these at each side of the fireplace the screen looked much better. The

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chairs were very well made, and would last a long time, especially, my wife said, as no one would care to sit down in them. They were certainly rather stiff and uncomfortable, but that was owing to the Eastlake pattern ; and as we did not need to use them, this was of no importance to us. Our house was furnished very comfortably. We made a point of having easy-chairs for our visitors as well as for ourselves, and, in fact, everything about our house was easy, warm, and bright. We believed that home should be a place of rest, and we bought chairs and sofas and lounges which took you in their arms like a mother, and made you forget the toils of the world.

But we really did not enjoy the screen as much as we expected we should, and as much as we had enjoyed almost everything that we had before bought for our house. Even with the companionship of the chairs, it did not seem to fit into the room. And everything else fitted. I think I may honestly say that we were people of taste, and that there were few incongruities in our house-furnishing.

But the two chairs and the screen did not look like anything else we had. They made our cosey sitting-room uncomfortable. We bore it as long as we could, and then we determined to take a bold step. We had always been consistent and thorough ; we would be so now. So we had all the furniture of the room removed, excepting the fire-screen and the two chairs, and replaced it with articles of the Eastlake style, in ash and oak. Of course our bright Wilton carpet did not suit these things, and we took it up, and had the floor puttied and stained, and bought a Turko-Persian carpet that was only partly large enough for the room.

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The walls we repapered, so as to tone them down to the general stiffness, and we had the ceiling colored sage-green, which would be in admirable keeping, the decorating-man said.

We didn't like this room, but we thought we would try and learn to like it. The fault was in ourselves, perhaps. High art in furniture was something we ought to understand and ought to like. We would do both, if we could.

But we soon saw that one reason we did not like our sitting-room was the great dissimilarity between it and the rest of the house. To come from our comfortable bedroom, or our handsome, bright, and softly furnished parlor, or our cheerful dining-room, into this severe and middle-aged sitting-room was too great a rise (or fall) for our perceptions. The strain or the shock was injurious to us. So we determined to strike another blow in the cause of consistency. We would furnish our whole house in the Eastlake style.

Fortunately, my wife's brother had recently married, and had bought a house about a quarter of a mile from our place. He had, so far, purchased but little furniture, and when we refurnished our sitting-room, he took the old furniture at a moderate price, for which I was very glad, for I had no place to put it. I call it "old" furniture to distinguish it from the new; but in reality it had not been used very long, and was in admirable condition. After buying these things from us, Tom, my brother-in-law, seemed to come to a stop in his house-furnishing. He and his wife lived in one or two rooms of their house, and appeared to be in no hurry to get themselves fixed and

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settled. Tom often came over and made remarks about our sitting-room, and the curious appearance it presented in the midst of a house furnished luxuriously in the most modern style, and this helped us to come to the determination to Eastlake our house thoroughly and completely.

Of course, as most of our new furniture had to be made to order, we could make our changes but slowly, and so refurnished one room at a time. Whenever a load of new furniture was brought to the house, Tom was on hand to buy the things we had been using. I must say that he was very honorable about the price, for he always brought a second-hand-furniture man from the city, and made him value the things, and he then paid me according to this valuation. I was frequently very much surprised at the low estimates placed on articles for which I had paid a good deal of money, but, of course, I could not expect more than the regular second-hand market price. He brought a different man every time, and their estimates were all low, in about the same proportion, so I could not complain. I do not think he used the men well, however, for I found out afterwards that they thought he wanted to sell the goods to them.

Tom was a nice fellow, of course, because he was my wife's brother, but there were some things about him I did not like. He annoyed me a good deal by coming around to our house, after it was newly furnished, and making remarks about the things.

"I can't see the sense," he said, one day, "in imitating furniture that was made in the days when people didn't know how to make furniture."

"Didn't know how!" I exclaimed. "Why, those

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were just the days when they *did* know how. Look at that bedstead! Did you ever see anything more solid and stanch and thoroughly honest than that? It will last for centuries, and always be what you see it now—a strong, good, ash bedstead."

"That's the mischief of it," Tom answered. "It will always be what it is now. If there was any chance of its improving I'd like it better. I don't know exactly what you mean by an honest bedstead, but if it's one that a fellow wouldn't wish to lie in, perhaps you're right. And what do you want with furniture that will last for centuries? You won't last for centuries, so what difference can it make to you?"

"Difference enough," I answered. "I want none of your flimsy, modern furniture. I want well-made things, in which the construction is first-class and evident. Look at that chair, for instance. You can see just how it is put together."

"Exactly so," replied Tom; "but what's the good of having one part of a chair run through another part and fastened with a peg, so that its construction may be evident? If those old fellows in the middle ages had known how to put chairs together as neatly and strongly as some of our modern furniture,—such as mine, for instance, which you know well enough is just as strong as any furniture need be,—don't you suppose they would have done it? Of course they would! The trouble about the construction of a chair like that is that it makes your own construction too evident. When I sit in one of them I think I know exactly where my joints are put together, especially those in my back."

Tom seemed particularly to dislike the tiles that

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were set in many articles of my new furniture. He could not see what was the good of inserting crockery into bedsteads and writing-desks; and as to the old pictures on the tiles, he utterly despised them.

“If the old buffers who made the originals of those pictures,” he said, “had known that free and enlightened citizens of the nineteenth century were going to copy them they’d have learned to draw.”

However, we didn’t mind this talk very much, and we even managed to smile when he made fun and puns and said: “Well, I suppose people in your station are bound to do this thing, as it certainly is *stylish*.”

But there was one thing he said that did trouble us. He came into the house one morning, and remarked:

“I don’t want to make you dissatisfied with your new furniture, but it seems to me—and to other people too, for I’ve heard them talking about it—that such furniture never can look as it ought to in such a house. In old times, when the people didn’t know how to make any better furniture than this, they didn’t know how to build decent houses, either. They had no plate-glass windows, or high ceilings, or hot and cold water in every room, or stationary wash-tubs, or any of that sort of thing. They had small windows with little panes of glass set in lead, and they had low rooms with often no ceiling at all, so that you could see the construction of the floor overhead, and they had all the old inconveniences that we have cast aside. If you want your furniture to look like what it makes believe to be, you ought to have it in a regular middle-age house—Elizabethan or Mary Annean, or whatever they call that sort of architecture. You could

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easily build such a house—something like that inconvenient edifice put up by the English commissioners at the Centennial Exhibition. And if you want to sell this house—”

“Which I don’t,” I replied quickly. “If I do anything, I’ll alter this place. I’m not going to build another.”

As I said, this speech of Tom’s disturbed us, and after talking about the matter for some days we determined to be consistent, and we had our house altered so that Tom declared it was a regular Eastlake house and no mistake. We had a doleful time while the alterations were going on, and when all was done, and we had settled down to quiet again, we missed very many of the comforts and conveniences to which we had been accustomed. But we were getting used to missing comfort, and so we sat and looked out of our little square window-panes, and tried to think the landscape as lovely and the sky as spacious and blue as when we viewed it through our high and wide French-plate windows.

But the landscape did not look very well, for it was not the right kind of a landscape. We altered our garden and lawn, and made “pleached alleys” and formal garden rows and other old-time arrangements.

And so, in time, we had an establishment which was consistent. It all matched the fire-screen, or rather the frame for a fire-screen.

It might now be supposed that Tom would let us rest awhile. But he did nothing of the kind.

“I tell you what it is,” said he. “There’s just one thing more that you need. You ought to wear clothes

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to suit the house and furniture. If you'd get an East-lake coat, with a tile set in the back—”

This was too much. I interrupted him.

That evening I took our fire-screen and I turned it around. There was a blank expanse on the back of it, and on this I painted, with a brush and some black paint,—with which my wife had been painting storks on some odd-shaped red clay pottery,—the following lines from Dante's “Inferno” :

“Soltaro finichezza poldo viner
Glabo icce suzza sil
Valuchicho mazza churi
Provenza succi—y gli.”

This is intended to mean :

“Why, oh, why have I taken
And thrown away my comfort on earth,
And descended into an old-fashioned hell !”

But as I do not understand Italian, it is not likely that any of the words I wrote are correct. But it makes no difference, as so few persons understand the language, and I can tell them what I intended the inscription to mean. The “y” and the “gli” are real Italian, and I will not attempt to translate them—but they look well and give an air of proper construction to the whole. I might have written the thing in Old English, but that is harder for me than Italian. The translation, which is my own, I tried to make, as nearly as possible, consistent with Dante's poem.

A few days after this I went over to Tom's house. A brighter, cosier house you never saw. I threw myself into one of my ex-arm-chairs. I lay back. I

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stretched out my legs under a table—I could never stretch out my legs under one of my own tables, because they had heavy Eastlake bars under them, and you had to sit up and keep your legs at an Eastlake angle. I drew a long sigh of satisfaction. Around me were all the pretty, tasteful, unsuitable things that Tom had bought from us—at eighty-seven per cent. off. Our own old spirit of home comfort seemed to be here. I sprang from my chair.

“Tom,” I cried, “what will you take for this house, this furniture—everything just as it stands?”

Tom named a sum. I closed the bargain.

We live in Tom’s house now, and two happier people are not easily found. Tom wanted me to sell him my remodelled house, but I wouldn’t do it. He would alter things. I rent it to him, and he has to live there, for he can get no other house in the neighborhood. He is not the cheerful fellow he used to be, but his wife comes over to see us very often.

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A MAN'S birth is generally considered the most important event of his existence, but I truly think that what I am about to relate was more important to me than my entrance into this world, because, had not these things happened, I am of the opinion that my life would have been of no value to me and my birth a misfortune. My father, Joshua Cuthbert, died soon after I came to my majority, leaving me what he had considered a comfortable property. This consisted of a large house and some forty acres of land, nearly the whole of which lay upon a bluff, which upon three sides descended to a little valley through which ran a gentle stream. I had no brothers or sisters ; my mother died when I was a boy ; and I, Walter Cuthbert, was left the sole representative of my immediate family.

My estate had been a comfortable one to my father, because his income from the practice of his profession as a physician enabled him to keep it up and provide satisfactorily for himself and me. I had no profession and but a very small income, the result of a few investments my father had made. Left to myself, I felt no inducement to take up any profession or business. My wants were simple, and for a few years I lived with-

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out experiencing any inconvenience from the economies which I was obliged to practise. My books, my dog, my gun, and my rod made life pass very pleasantly to me, and the subject of an increase of income never disturbed my mind.

But, as time passed on, the paternal home began to present an air of neglect and even dilapidation, which occasionally attracted my attention, and caused, as I incidentally discovered, a great deal of unfavorable comment among my neighbors, who thought that I should go to work and at least earn money enough to put the house and grounds in a condition which should not be unworthy the memory of the good Dr. Cuthbert. In fact, I began to be looked upon as a shiftless young man, and now and then I found a person old enough and bold enough to tell me so.

But, instead of endeavoring to find some suitable occupation by which I might better my condition and improve my estate, I fell in love, which, in the opinion of my neighbors, was the very worst thing that could have happened to me at this time. I lived in a thrifty region, and for a man who could not support himself to think of taking upon him the support of a wife, especially such a wife as Agnes Havelot would be, was considered more than folly and looked upon as a crime. Everybody knew that I was in love with Miss Havelot, for I went to court her as boldly as I went to fish or shoot. There was a good deal of talk about it, and this finally came to the ears of Mr. Havelot, my lady's father, who thereupon promptly ordered her to have no more to do with me.

The Havelot estate, which adjoined mine, was a very large one, containing hundreds and hundreds of acres;

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and the Havelots were rich—rich enough to frighten any poor young man of marrying intent. But I did not appreciate the fact that I was a poor young man. I had never troubled my head about money as it regarded myself, and I now did not trouble my head about it as it regarded Agnes. I loved her, I hoped she loved me, and all other considerations were thrown aside. Mr. Havelot, however, was a man of a different way of thinking.

It was a little time before I became convinced that the decision of Agnes's father that there should be no communication between that dear girl and myself really meant anything. I had never been subjected to restrictions, and I did not understand how people of spirit could submit to them. But I was made to understand it when Mr. Havelot, finding me wandering about his grounds, very forcibly assured me that if I should make my appearance there again, or if he discovered any attempt on my part to communicate with his daughter in any way, he would send her from home. He concluded the very brief interview by stating that if I had any real regard for his daughter's happiness I would cease attentions which met with the most decided disapprobation from her only surviving parent, and which would result in exiling her from home. I begged for one more interview with Miss Havelot, and if it had been granted I should have assured her of the state of my affections, no matter if there were reasons to suppose that I would never see her again. But her father very sternly forbade anything of the kind, and I went away crushed.

It was a very hard case, for if I played the part of a bold lover, and tried to see Agnes without regard to

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the wicked orders of her father, I should certainly be discovered, and then it would be not only myself, but the poor girl, who would suffer. So I determined that I would submit to the Havelot decree. No matter if I never saw her again, never heard the sound of her voice, it would be better to have her near me, to have her breathe the same air, cast up her eyes at the same sky, listen to the same birds, that I breathed, looked at, and listened to, than to have her far away, probably in Kentucky, where I knew she had relatives, and where the grass was blue and the sky probably green, or, at any rate, would appear so to her if in the least degree she felt as I did in regard to the ties of home and the affinities between the sexes.

I now found myself in a most doleful and even desperate condition of mind. There was nothing in the world that I could have for which I cared. Hunting, fishing, and the rambles through woods and fields that had once been so delightful to me now became tasks I seldom undertook. The only occupation in which I felt the slightest interest was that of sitting in a tower of my house with a telescope, endeavoring to see my Agnes on some portion of her father's grounds. But, although I diligently directed my glass at the slightest stretch of lawn or bit of path which I could discern through openings in the foliage, I never caught sight of her. I knew, however, by means of daily questions addressed to my cook, whose daughter was a servant in the Havelot house, that Agnes was yet at home. For that reason I remained at home. Otherwise I should have become a wanderer.

About a month after I had fallen into this most un-

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happy state, an old friend came to see me. We had been school-fellows, but he differed from me in almost every respect. He was full of ambition and energy, and, although he was but a few years older than myself, he had already made a name in the world. He was a geologist, earnest and enthusiastic in his studies and his investigations. He told me frankly that the object of his visit was twofold : in the first place, he wanted to see me ; and, secondly, he wanted to make some geological examinations on my grounds, which were situated, as he informed me, upon a terminal moraine, a formation which he had not yet had an opportunity of practically investigating.

I had not known that I lived on a moraine, and now that I knew it, I did not care. But Tom Burton glowed with high spirits and lively zeal as he told me how the great bluff on which my house stood, together with the other hills and wooded terraces which stretched away from it along the side of the valley, had been formed by the minute fragments of rock and soil which, during ages and ages, had been gradually pushed down from the mountains by a great glacier which once occupied the country to the northeast of my house.

“Why, Walter, my boy,” he cried, “if I had not read it all in the books I should have known for myself, as soon as I came here, that there had once been a glacier up there, and as it gradually moved to the southwest it made this country what it is. Have you a stream down there in that dell which I see lies at right angles with the valley and opens into it?”

“No,” said I. “I wish there was one. The only

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stream we have flows along the valley and not on my property."

Without waiting for me, Tom ran down into my dell, pushed his way through the underbrush to its upper end, and before long came back flushed with heat and enthusiasm.

"Well, sir," he said, "that dell was once the bed of a glacial stream, and you may as well clear it out and plant corn there if you want to, for there never will be another stream flowing through it until there is another glacier out in the country beyond. And now I want you to let me dig about here. I want to find out what sort of stuff the glacier brought down from the mountains. I will hire a man, and will promise you to fill up all the holes I make."

I had no objection to my friend's digging as much as he pleased, and for three days he busied himself in getting samples of the soil of my estate. Sometimes I went out and looked at him, and gradually a little of his earnest ardor infused itself into me, and with some show of interest I looked into the holes he had made and glanced over the mineral specimens he showed me.

"Well, Walter," said he, when he took leave of me, "I am very sorry that I did not discover that the glacier had raked out the bed of a gold-mine from the mountains up there and brought it down to you, or, at any rate, some valuable iron ore. But I am obliged to say it did not do anything of the sort. But I can tell you one thing it brought you, and although it is not of any great commercial value, I should think you could make good use of it here on your place. You

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have one of the finest deposits of gravel on this bluff that I have met with, and if you were to take out a lot of it and spread it over your driveways and paths, it would make it a great deal pleasanter for you to go about here in bad weather, and would wonderfully improve your property. Good roads always give an idea of thrift and prosperity." Then he went away with a valise nearly full of mineral specimens which he assured me were very interesting.

My interest in geological formations died away as soon as Tom Burton had departed, but what he said about making gravel roads giving the place an air of thrift and prosperity had its effect upon my mind. It struck me that it would be a very good thing if the people in the neighborhood, especially the Havelots, were to perceive on my place some evidences of thrift and prosperity. Most palpable evidences of unthrift and impecuniosity had cut me off from Agnes, and why might it not be that some signs of improved circumstances would remove, to a degree at least, the restrictions which had been placed between us? This was but a very little thing upon which to build hopes, but ever since men and women have loved they have built grand hopes upon very slight foundations. I determined to put my roadways in order.

My efforts in this direction were really evidence of anything but thriftiness, for I could not in the least afford to make my drives and walks resemble the smooth and beautiful roads which wound over the Havelot estate, although to do this was my intention, and I set about the work without loss of time. I took up this occupation with so much earnestness that it seriously interfered with my observations from the tower.

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I hired two men and set them to work to dig a gravel-pit. They made excavations at several places, and very soon found what they declared to be a very fine quality of road-gravel. I ordered them to dig on until they had taken out what they believed to be enough to cover all my roads. When this had been done I would have it properly spread and rolled. As this promised to be a very good job, the men went to work in fine spirits, and evidently made up their minds that the improvements I desired would require a vast deal of gravel.

When they had dug a hole so deep that it became difficult to throw up the gravel from the bottom, I suggested that they should dig at some other place. But to this they objected, declaring that the gravel was getting better and better, and it would be well to go on down as long as the quality continued to be so good. So, at last, they put a ladder into the pit, one man carrying the gravel up in a hod, while the other dug it. And when they had gone down so deep that this was no longer practicable, they rigged up a derrick and windlass and drew up the gravel in a bucket.

Had I been of a more practical turn of mind I might have perceived that this method of working made the job a very long and, consequently, to the laborers, a profitable one. But no such idea entered into my head, and not noticing whether they were bringing up sand or gravel, I allowed them to proceed.

One morning I went out to the spot where the excavation was being made, and found that the men had built a fire on the ground near the opening of the pit, and that one of them was bending over it, warming himself. As the month was July, this naturally sur-

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prised me, and I inquired the reason for so strange a performance.

“Upon my soul,” said the man who was rubbing his hands over the blaze, “I do not wonder you are surprised, but it’s so cold down at the bottom of that pit that me fingers is almost frosted. An’ we haven’t struck any wather neither, which couldn’t be expected, of course, a-diggin’ down into the hill like this.”

I looked into the hole and found it was very deep. “I think it would be better to stop digging here,” said I, “and try some other place.”

“I wouldn’t do that just now,” said the other man, who was preparing to go down in the bucket. “To be sure, it’s a good deal more like a well than a gravel-pit, but it’s bigger at the top than at the bottom, and there’s no danger of its cavin’ in, and now that we’ve got everything rigged up all right, it would be a pity to make a change yet awhile.”

So I let them go on. But the next day, when I went out again, I found that they had come to the conclusion that it was time to give up digging in that hole. They both declared that it almost froze their feet to stand on the ground where they worked at the bottom of the excavation. The slow business of drawing up the gravel by means of a bucket and windlass was, therefore, reluctantly given up. The men now went to work to dig outward from this pit toward the edge of the bluff which overlooked my little dell, and gradually made a wide trench, which they deepened until—and I am afraid to say how long they worked before this was done—they could walk to the original pit from the level of the dell. They then deepened the

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inner end of the trench, wheeling out the gravel in barrows, until they had made an inclined pathway from the dell to the bottom of the pit. The wheeling now became difficult, and the men soon declared that they were sure that they had quite gravel enough.

When they made this announcement, and I had gone into some financial calculations, I found that I would be obliged to put an end to my operations, at least for the present, for my available funds were gone, or would be when I had paid what I owed for the work. The men were very much disappointed by the sudden ending of this good job, but they departed, and I was left to gaze upon a vast amount of gravel of which, for the present at least, I could not afford to make the slightest use.

The mental despondency which had been somewhat lightened during my excavating operations now returned, and I became rather more gloomy and downcast than before. My cook declared that it was of no use to prepare meals which I never ate, and suggested that it would save money if I discharged her. As I had not paid her anything for a long time, I did not see how this would benefit me.

Wandering about, one day, with my hat pulled down over my eyes and my hands thrust deep into my pockets, I strolled into the dell, and stood before the wide trench which led to the pit in which I had foolishly sunk the money which should have supported me for mouths. I entered this dismal passage, and walked slowly and carefully down the incline until I reached the bottom of the original pit, where I had never been before. I stood here, looking up and around me, and wondering how men could bring them-

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selves to dig down into such dreary depths simply for the sake of a few dollars a week, when I involuntarily began to stamp my feet. They were very cold, although I had not been there more than a minute. I wondered at this, and took up some of the loose gravel in my hand. It was quite dry, but it chilled my fingers. I did not understand it, and I did not try to, but walked up the trench and around into the dell, thinking of Agnes.

I was very fond of milk, which, indeed, was almost the only food I now cared for, and I was consequently much disappointed at my noonday meal when I found that the milk had soured and was not fit to drink.

“You see, sir,” said Susan, “ice is very scarce and dear, and we can’t afford to buy much of it. There was no freezin’ weather last winter, and the price has gone up as high as the thermometer, sir, and so, between the two of ‘em, I can’t keep things from spoilin’.”

The idea now came to me that if Susan would take the milk, and anything else she wished to keep cool in this hot weather, to the bottom of the gravel-pit, she would find the temperature there cold enough to preserve them without ice, and I told her so.

The next morning Susan came to me with a pleased countenance and said, “I put the butter and the milk in that pit last night, and the butter’s just as hard and the milk’s as sweet as if it had been kept in an ice-house. But the place is as cold as an ice-house, sir, and, unless I am mistaken, there’s ice in it. Any-way, what do you call that?” And she took from a little basket a piece of grayish ice as large as my fist. “When I found it was so cold down there, sir,” she

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said, "I thought I would dig a little myself and see what made it so. I took a fire-shovel and hatchet, and, when I had scraped away some of the gravel, I came to something hard, and chopped off this piece of it, which is real ice, sir, or I know nothing about it. Perhaps there used to be an ice-house there, and you might get some of it if you dug, though why anybody should put it down so deep, and then cover it up, I'm sure I don't know. But, as long as there's any there, I think we should get it out, even if there's only a little of it, for I cannot take everything down to that pit, and we might as well have it in the refrigerator."

This seemed to me like very good sense, and if I had had a man I should have ordered him to go down to the pit and dig up any lumps of ice he might find and bring them to the house. But I had no man, and I therefore became impressed with the opinion that if I did not want to drink sour milk for the rest of the summer, it might be a good thing for me to go down there and dig out some of the ice myself. So, with pickaxe and shovel, I went to the bottom of the pit and set myself to work.

A few inches below the surface I found that my shovel struck something hard, and clearing away the gravel from this for two or three square feet, I looked down upon a solid mass of ice. It was dirty and begrimed, but it was truly ice. With my pick I detached some large pieces of it. These, with some discomfort, I carried out into the dell, where Susan might come with her basket and get them.

For several days Susan and I took out ice from the pit, and then I thought that perhaps Tom Burton might feel some interest in this frozen deposit in my

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terminal moraine, and so I wrote to him about it. He did not answer my letter, but instead arrived himself the next afternoon.

“Ice at the bottom of a gravel-pit,” said he, “is a thing I never heard of. Will you lend me a spade and a pickaxe?”

When Tom came out of that pit—it was too cold a place for me to go with him and watch his proceedings—I saw him come running toward the house.

“Walter,” he shouted, “we must hire all the men we can find, and dig, dig, dig! If I am not mistaken, something has happened on your place that is wonderful almost beyond belief. But we must not stop to talk. We must dig, dig, dig—dig all day and dig all night! Don’t think of the cost! I’ll attend to that. I’ll get the money. What we must do is to find men and set them to work.”

“What’s the matter?” said I. “What has happened?”

“I haven’t time to talk about it now. Besides, I don’t want to, for fear I should find I am mistaken. But get on your hat, my dear fellow, and let’s go over to the town for men.”

The next day there were eight men working under the direction of my friend Burton, and although they did not work at night, as he wished them to do, they labored steadfastly for ten days or more before Tom was ready to announce what it was he had hoped to discover, and whether or not he had found it. For a day or two I watched the workmen from time to time, but after that I kept away, preferring to await the result of my friend’s operations. He evidently expected to find something worth having, and whether

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he was successful or not, it suited me better to know the truth all at once and not by degrees.

On the morning of the eleventh day Tom came into the room where I was reading, and sat down near me. His face was pale, his eyes glittering. "Old friend," said he,—and as he spoke I noticed that his voice was a little husky, although it was plain enough that his emotion was not occasioned by bad fortune,—"my good old friend, I have found out what made the bottom of your gravel-pit so uncomfortably cold. You need not doubt what I am going to tell you, for my excavations have been complete and thorough enough to make me sure of what I say. Don't you remember I told you that ages ago there was a vast glacier in the country which stretches from here to the mountains? Well, sir, the foot of that glacier must have reached farther this way than is generally supposed. At any rate, a portion of it did extend in this direction as far as this bit of the world which is now yours. This end or spur of the glacier, nearly a quarter of a mile in width, I should say, and pushing before it a portion of the terminal moraine on which you live, came slowly toward the valley until suddenly it detached itself from the main glacier and disappeared from sight.

"That is to say, my boy,"—and Tom sprang to his feet, too excited to sit still any longer,—"it descended to the bowels of the earth, at least for a considerable distance in that direction. Now you want to know how this happened. Well, I'll tell you. In this part of the country there are scattered about, here and there, great caves. Geologists know one or two of them, and it is certain that there are others undiscovered. Well, sir, your glacier spur discovered one

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of them, and when it had lain over the top of it for an age or two, and had grown bigger and bigger, and heavier and heavier, it at last burst through the rock roof of the cave, snapping itself from the rest of the glacier and falling in one vast mass to the bottom of the subterranean abyss. Walter, it is there now!

“The rest of the glacier came steadily down. The moraines were forced before it. They covered this glacier spur, this broken fragment, and by the time the climate changed and the average of temperature rose above that of the glacial period, this vast sunken mass of ice was packed away below the surface of the earth, out of the reach of the action of friction, or heat, or moisture, or anything else which might destroy it. And through all the long procession of centuries that broken end of the glacier has been lying in your terminal moraine. It is there now. It is yours, Walter Cuthbert. It is an ice-mine. It is wealth. And, so far as I can make out, it is nearly all upon your land. To you is the possession, but to me is the glory of the discovery. A bit of the glacial period kept in a cave for us! It is too wonderful to believe! Walter, have you any brandy?”

It may well be supposed that by this time I was thoroughly awakened to the importance and the amazing character of my friend’s discovery, and I hurried with him to the scene of operations. There he explained everything, and showed me how, by digging away a portion of the face of the bluff, he had found that this vast fragment of the glacier, which had been so miraculously preserved, ended in an irregularly perpendicular wall, which extended downward he knew not how far, and the edge of it on its upper side

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had been touched by my workmen in digging their pit. "It was the gradual melting of the upper end of this glacier," said Tom, "probably more elevated than the lower end, that made your dell. I wondered why the depression did not extend farther up toward the spot where the foot of the glacier was supposed to have been. This end of the fragment, being sunk in deeper and afterwards covered up more completely, probably never melted at all."

"It is amazing—astounding!" said I. "But what of it, now that we have found it?"

"What of it?" cried Tom. And his whole form trembled as he spoke. "You have here a source of wealth, of opulence, which shall endure for the rest of your days. Here at your very door, where it can be taken out and transported with the least possible trouble, is ice enough to supply the town, the county, yes, I might say the State, for hundreds of years. No, sir, I cannot go in to supper; I cannot eat. I leave to you the business and practical part of this affair; I go to report upon its scientific features."

"Agnes," I exclaimed, as I walked to the house with my hands clasped and my eyes raised to the sky, "the glacial period has given thee to me!"

This did not immediately follow, although I went that very night to Mr. Havelot and declared to him that I was now rich enough to marry his daughter. He laughed at me in a manner which was very annoying, and made certain remarks which indicated that he thought it probable that it was not the roof of the cave, but my mind, which had given way under the influence of undue pressure.

The contemptuous manner in which I had been

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received aroused within me a very unusual state of mind. While talking to Mr. Havelot I heard not far away in some part of the house a voice singing. It was the voice of Agnes, and I believed she sang so that I could hear her. But as her sweet tones reached my ear there came to me at the same time the harsh, contemptuous words of her father. I left the house determined to crush that man to the earth beneath a superincumbent mass of ice—or the evidence of the results of the ownership of such a mass—which would make him groan and weep as he apologized to me for his scornful and disrespectful utterances, and at the same time offer me the hand of his daughter.

When the discovery of the ice-mine, as it grew to be called, became generally known, my grounds were crowded by sight-seers, and reporters of newspapers were more plentiful than squirrels. But the latter were referred to Burton, who gladly talked to them as long as they could afford to listen, and I felt myself at last compelled to shut my gates to the former.

I had offers of capital to develop this novel source of wealth, and I accepted enough of this assistance to enable me to begin operations on a moderate scale. It was considered wise not to uncover any portion of the glacier spur, but to construct an inclined shaft down to its wall-like end, and, from this, tunnel into the great mass. Immediately the leading ice company of the neighboring town contracted with me for all the ice I could furnish, and the flood-gates of affluence began slowly to rise.

The earliest, and certainly one of the greatest, benefits which came to me from this bequest from the prehistoric past was the new energy and vigor with

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which my mind and body were now infused. My old, careless method of life and my recent melancholy, despairing mood were gone, and I now began to employ myself upon the main object of my life with an energy and enthusiasm almost equal to that of my friend Tom Burton. This present object of my life was to prepare my home for Agnes.

The great piles of gravel which my men had dug from the well-like pit were spread upon the roadways and rolled smooth and hard. My lawn was mowed, my flower-beds and borders put in order, useless bushes and undergrowth cut out and cleared away, my outbuildings were repaired, and the grounds around my house rapidly assumed their old appearance of neatness and beauty. Ice was very scarce that summer, and as the wagons wound away from the opening of the shaft which led down to the glacier, carrying their loads to the nearest railway station, so money came to me—not in large sums at first, for preparations had not yet been perfected for taking out the ice in great quantities, but enough to enable me to go on with my work as rapidly as I could plan it. I set about renovating and brightening and newly furnishing my house. Whatever I thought Agnes would like I bought and put into it. I tried to put myself in her place as I selected the paper-hangings and the materials with which to cover the furniture.

Sometimes, while thus employed selecting ornaments or useful articles for my house, and using, as far as was possible, the taste and judgment of another instead of my own, the idea came to me that perhaps Agnes had never heard of my miraculous good fortune. Certainly her father would not be likely to in-

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form her, and perhaps she still thought of me, if she thought at all, as the poor young man from whom she had been obliged to part because he was poor.

But whether she knew that I was growing rich, or whether she thought I was becoming poorer and poorer, I thought only of the day when I could go to her father and tell him that I was able to take his daughter and place her in a home as beautiful as that in which she now lived, and maintain her with all the comforts and luxuries which he could give her.

One day I asked my faithful cook, who also acted as my housekeeper and general supervisor, to assist me in making out a list of china which I intended to purchase.

"Are you thinkin' of buyin' china, sir?" she asked. "We have now quite as much as we really need."

"Oh, yes," said I. "I shall get complete sets of everything that can be required for a properly furnished household."

Susan gave a little sigh. "You are spendin' a lot of money, sir, and some of it for things that a single gentleman would be likely not to care very much about. And if you was to take it into your head to travel and stay away for a year or two, there's a good many things you've bought that would look shabby when you come back, no matter how careful I might be in dustin' 'em and keepin' 'em covered."

"But I have no idea of travelling," said I. "There's no place so pleasant as this to me."

Susan was silent for a few moments, and then she said: "I know very well why you are doin' all this, and I feel it my bounden duty to say to you that there's a chance of its bein' no use. I don't speak without

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good reason, and I wouldn't do it if I didn't think that it might make trouble lighter to you when it comes."

"What are you talking about, Susan? What do you mean?"

"Well, sir, this is what I mean: It was only last night that my daughter Jane was in Mr. Havelot's dinin'-room after dinner was over, and Mr. Havelot and a friend of his were sittin' there, smokin' their cigars and drinkin' their coffee. She went in and come out again as she was busy takin' away the dishes, and they paid no attention to her, but went on talkin', without knowin', most likely, she was there. Mr. Havelot and the gentleman was talkin' about you, and Jane she heard Mr. Havelot say as plain as anything, and she said she couldn't be mistaken, that even if your nonsensical ice-mine proved to be worth anything, he would never let his daughter marry an iceman. He spoke most disrespectful of icemen, sir, and said that it would make him sick to have a son-in-law whose business it was to sell ice to butchers, and hotels, and grog-shops, and pork-packers, and all that sort of people, and that he would as soon have his daughter marry the man who supplied a hotel with sausages as the one who supplied it with ice to keep those sausages from spoilin'. You see, sir, Mr. Havelot lives on his property as his father did before him, and he is a very proud man, with a heart as hard and cold as that ice down under your land. And it's borne in on me very strong, sir, that it would be a bad thing for you to keep on thinkin' that you are gettin' this house all ready to bring Miss Havelot to when you have married her. For if Mr. Havelot

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keeps on livin', which there's every chance of his doin', it may be many a weary year before you get Miss Agnes, if you ever get her. And havin' said that, sir, I say no more, and I would not have said this much if I hadn't felt it my bounden duty to your father's son to warn him that most likely he was workin' for what he might never get, and so keep him from breakin' his heart when he found out the truth all of a sudden."

With that Susan left me, without offering any assistance in making out a list of china. This was a terrible story. But, after all, it was founded only upon servants' gossip. In this country, even proud, rich men like Mr. Havelot did not have such absurd ideas regarding the source of wealth. Money is money, and whether it is derived from the ordinary products of the earth, from which came much of Mr. Havelot's revenue, or from an extraordinary project such as my glacier spur, it truly could not matter so far as concerned the standing in society of its possessor. What utter absurdity was this which Susan had told me! If I were to go to Mr. Havelot and tell him that I would not marry his daughter because he supplied brewers and bakers with the products of his fields, would he not consider me an idiot? I determined to pay no attention to the idle tale. But alas! determinations of that sort are often of little avail. I did pay attention to it, and my spirits drooped.

The tunnel into the glacier spur had now attained considerable length, and the ice in the interior was found to be of a much finer quality than that first met with, which was of a grayish hue and somewhat inclined to crumble. When the workmen reached a

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grade of ice as good as they could expect, they began to enlarge the tunnel into a chamber, and from this they proposed to extend tunnels in various directions, after the fashion of a coal-mine. The ice was hauled out on sledges through the tunnel and then carried up a wooden railway to the mouth of the shaft.

It was comparatively easy to walk down the shaft and enter the tunnel, and when it happened that the men were not at work I allowed visitors to go down and view this wonderful ice-cavern. The walls of the chamber appeared semi-transparent, and the light of the candles or lanterns gave the whole scene a weird and beautiful aspect. It was almost possible to imagine one's self surrounded by limpid waters, which might at any moment rush upon him and engulf him.

Every day or two Tom Burton came with a party of scientific visitors, and had I chosen to stop the work of taking out ice, admitted the public and charged a price for admission, I might have made almost as much money as I, at that time, derived from the sale of the ice. But such a method of profit was repugnant to me.

For several days after Susan's communication to me, I worked on in my various operations, endeavoring to banish from my mind the idle nonsense she had spoken of. But one of its effects upon me was to make me feel that I ought not to allow hopes so important to rest upon uncertainties. So I determined that as soon as my house and grounds should be in a condition with which I should for the time be satisfied, I would go boldly to Mr. Havelot, and, casting out of my recollection everything that Susan had said,

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invite him to visit me and see for himself the results of the discovery of which he had spoken with such derisive contempt. This would be a straightforward and business-like answer to his foolish objections to me, and I believed that in his heart the old gentleman would properly appreciate my action.

About this time there came to my place Aaron Boyce, an elderly farmer of the neighborhood, and finding me outside, he seized the opportunity to have a chat with me.

"I tell you what it is, Mr. Cuthbert," said he, "the people in this neighborhood hasn't give you credit for what's in you. The way you have fixed up this place, and the short time you have took to do it, is enough to show us now what sort of a man you are. And I tell you, sir, we're proud of you for a neighbor. I don't believe there's another gentleman in this county of your age that could have done what you have done in so short a time. I expect now you will be thinkin' of gettin' married and startin' housekeepin' in a regular fashion. That comes just as natural as to set hens in the spring. By the way, have you heard that old Mr. Havelot's thinkin' of goin' abroad? I didn't believe he would ever do that again, because he's gettin' pretty well on in years, but old men will do queer things, as well as young ones."

"Going abroad!" I cried. "Does he intend to take his daughter with him?"

Mr. Aaron Boyce smiled grimly. He was a great old gossip, and he had already obtained the information he wanted. "Yes," he said, "I've heard it was on her account he's goin'. She's been kind of weakly

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lately, they tell me, and hasn't took to her food, and the doctors has said that what she wants is a sea voyage and a change to foreign parts."

Going abroad! Foreign parts! This was more terrible than anything I had imagined. I would go to Mr. Havelot that very evening, the only time which I would be certain to find him at home, and talk to him in a way which would be sure to bring him to his senses, if he had any. And if I should find that he had no sense of propriety or justice, no sense of his duty to his fellow-man and to his offspring, then I would begin a bold fight for Agnes, a fight which I would not give up until, with her own lips, she told me it would be useless. I would follow her to Kentucky, to Europe, to the uttermost ends of the earth. I could do it now; the frozen deposits in my terminal moraine would furnish me with the means. I walked away and left the old farmer standing grinning. No doubt my improvements and renovations had been the subject of gossip in the neighborhood, and he had come over to see if he could find out anything definite in regard to the object of them. He had succeeded, but he had done more: he had nerved me to instantly begin the conquest of Agnes, whether by diplomacy or war.

I was so anxious to begin this conquest that I could scarcely wait for the evening to come. At the noon-hour, when the ice-works were deserted, I walked down the shaft and into the ice-chamber to see what had been done since my last visit. I decided to insist that operations upon a larger scale should be immediately begun, in order that I might have plenty of money with which to carry on my contemplated cam-

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paign. Whether it was one of peace or war, I should want all the money I could get.

I took with me a lantern, and went around the chamber, which was now twenty-five or thirty feet in diameter, examining the new inroads which had been made upon its walls. There was a tunnel commenced opposite the one by which the chamber was entered, but it had not been opened more than a dozen feet, and it seemed to me that the men had not been working with any very great energy. I wanted to see a continuous stream of ice-blocks from that chamber to the mouth of the shaft.

While grumbling thus I heard behind me a sudden noise like thunder and the crashing of walls, and turning quickly, I saw that a portion of the roof of the chamber had fallen in! Nor had it ceased to fall. As I gazed several great masses of ice came down from above and piled themselves upon that which had already fallen.

Startled and frightened, I sprang toward the opening of the entrance tunnel. But alas! I found that that was the point where the roof had given away, and between me and the outer world was a wall of solid ice, through which it would be as impossible for me to break as if it were a barrier of rock. With the quick instinct which comes to men in danger, I glanced about to see if the workmen had left their tools. But there were none; they had been taken outside. Then I stood and gazed stupidly at the mass of fallen ice, which, even as I looked upon it, was cracking and snapping, pressed down by the weight above it, and forming itself into an impervious barrier, without crevice or open seam.

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Then I madly shouted. But of what avail were shouts down there in the depths of the earth? I soon ceased this useless expenditure of strength, and, with my lantern in my hand, began to walk around the chamber, throwing the light upon the walls and the roof. I became impressed with the fear that the whole cavity might cave in at once and bury me here in a tomb of ice. But I saw no cracks, nor any sign of further disaster. But why think of anything more? Was not this enough? For, before that ice-barrier could be cleared away, would I not freeze to death?

I now continued to walk, not because I expected to find anything or to do anything, but simply to keep myself warm by action. As long as I could move about, I believed that there was no immediate danger of succumbing to the intense cold, for, when a young man, travelling in Switzerland, I had been in the cave of a glacier, and it was not cold enough to prevent some old women from sitting there to play the zither for the sake of a few coppers from visitors. But I could not expect to be able to continue walking until I should be rescued, and if I sat down, or by chance slept from exhaustion, I must perish.

The more I thought of it, the more sure I became that in any case I must perish. A man in a block of ice could have no chance of life. And Agnes! Oh, heavens! what demon of the ice had leagued with old Havelot to shut me up in this frozen prison? For a long time I continued to walk, beat my body with my arms, and stamp my feet. The instinct of life was strong within me. I would live as long as I could, and think of Agnes. When I should be frozen I could not think of her.

Sometimes I stopped and listened. I was sure I

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could hear noises, but I could not tell whether they were above me or not. In the centre of the ice-barrier, about four feet from the ground, was a vast block of the frozen substance which was unusually clear and seemed to have nothing on the other side of it, for through it I could see flickers of light, as though people were going about with lanterns. It was quite certain that the accident had been discovered, for, had not the thundering noise been heard by persons outside, the workmen would have seen what had happened as soon as they came into the tunnel to begin their afternoon operations.

At first I wondered why they did not set to work with a will and cut away this barrier and let me out. But there suddenly came to my mind a reason for this lack of energy which was more chilling than the glistening walls around me: Why should they suppose that I was in the ice-chamber? I was not in the habit of coming here very often, but I was in the habit of wandering off by myself at all hours of the day. This thought made me feel that I might as well lie down on the floor of this awful cave and die at once. The workmen might think it unsafe to mine any farther in this part of the glacier, and begin operations at some other point. I did sit down for a moment, and then I rose involuntarily and began my weary round. Suddenly I thought of looking at my watch. It was nearly five o'clock. I had been more than four hours in that dreadful place, and I did not believe that I could continue to exercise my limbs very much longer. The lights I had seen had ceased. It was quite plain that the workmen had no idea that any one was imprisoned in the cave.

But soon after I had come to this conclusion I saw

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through the clear block of ice a speck of light, and it became stronger and stronger, until I believed it to be close to the other side of the block. There it remained stationary. But there seemed to be other points of light, which moved about in a strange way, and near it. Now I stood by the block, watching. When my feet became very cold, I stamped them. But there I stood fascinated, for what I saw was truly surprising. A large coal of fire appeared on the other side of the block. Then it suddenly vanished and was succeeded by another coal. This disappeared, and another took its place, each one seeming to come nearer and nearer to me. Again and again did these coals appear. They reached the centre of the block. They approached my side of it. At last one was so near to me that I thought it was about to break through ; but it vanished. Then there came a few quick thuds, and the end of a piece of iron protruded from the block. This was withdrawn, and through the aperture there came a voice which said : "Mr. Cuthbert, are you in there?" It was the voice of Agnes !

Weak and cold as I was, fire and energy rushed through me at these words. "Yes!" I exclaimed, my mouth to the hole. "Agnes, is that you?"

"Wait a minute," came from the other side of the aperture. "I must make it bigger. I must keep it from closing up."

Again came the coals of fire, running backward and forward through the long hole in the block of ice. I could see now what they were : they were irons used by plumbers for melting solder and that sort of thing, and Agnes was probably heating them in a little fur-

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nace outside, and withdrawing them as fast as they cooled. It was not long before the aperture was very much enlarged, and then there came grating through it a long tin tube nearly two inches in diameter, which almost, but not quite, reached my side of the block.

Now came again the voice of Agnes: "Oh, Mr. Cuthbert, are you truly there? Are you crushed? Are you wounded? Are you nearly frozen? Are you starved? Tell me quickly if you are yet safe."

Had I stood in a palace padded with the softest silk and filled with spicy odors from a thousand rose-gardens, I could not have been better satisfied with my surroundings than I was at that moment. Agnes was not two feet away! She was telling me that she cared for me! In a very few words I assured her that I was uninjured. Then I was on the point of telling her I loved her, for I believed that not a moment should be lost in making this avowal. I could not die without her knowing that. But the appearance of a mass of paper at the other end of the tube prevented the expression of my sentiments. This was slowly pushed on until I could reach it. Then there came the words: "Mr. Cuthbert, these are sandwiches. Eat them immediately, and walk about while you are doing it. You must keep yourself warm until the men get to you."

Obedient to the slightest wish of this dear creature, I went twice around the cave, devouring the sandwiches as I walked. They were the most delicious food I had ever tasted. They were given to me by Agnes! I came back to the opening. I could not immediately begin my avowal. I must ask a question

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first. "Can they get to me?" I inquired. "Is anybody trying to do that? Are they working there by you? I do not hear them at all."

"Oh, no," she answered. "They are not working here. They are on top of the bluff, trying to dig down to you. They were afraid to meddle with the ice here, for fear that more of it might come down and crush you and the men, too. Oh, there has been a dreadful excitement since it was found that you were in there!"

"How could they know I was here?" I asked.

"It was your old Susan who first thought of it. She saw you walking toward the shaft about noon, and then she remembered that she had not seen you again. And when they came into the tunnel here, they found one of the lanterns gone, and the big stick you generally carry lying where the lantern had been. Then it was known that you must be inside. Oh, then there was an awful time! The foreman of the icemen examined everything, and said they must dig down to you from above. He put his men to work; but they could do very little, for they had hardly any spades. Then they sent into town for help, and over to the new park for the Italians working there. From the way these men set to work you might have thought that they would dig away the whole bluff in about five minutes, but they didn't. Nobody seemed to know what to do, or how to get to work, and the hole they made, when they did begin, was filled up with men almost as fast as they threw out the stones and gravel. I don't believe anything would have been done properly if your friend Mr. Burton hadn't happened to come with two scientific gentlemen, and

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since that he has been directing everything. You can't think what a splendid fellow he is! I fairly adored him when I saw him giving his orders and making everybody skip around in the right way."

"Tom is a very good man," said I, "but it is his business to direct that sort of work, and it is not surprising that he knows how to do it. But, Agnes, they may never get down to me, and we do not know that this roof may not cave in upon me at any moment. And before this or anything else happens I want to tell you—"

"Mr. Cuthbert," said Agnes, "is there plenty of oil in your lantern? It would be dreadful if it were to go out and leave you there in the dark. I thought of that, and brought you a little bottle of kerosene so that you can fill it. I am going to push the bottle through now, if you please." And with this a large phial, cork-end foremost, came slowly through the tube, propelled by one of the soldering-irons. Then came Agnes's voice: "Please fill your lantern immediately, because if it goes out you cannot find it in the dark; and then walk several times around the cave, for you have been standing still too long already."

I obeyed these injunctions, but in two or three minutes was again at the end of the tube. "Agnes," said I, "how did you happen to come here? Did you contrive in your own mind this method of communicating with me?"

"Oh, yes, I did," she said. "Everybody said that this mass of ice must not be meddled with, but I knew very well it would not hurt it to make a hole through it."

"But how did you happen to be here?" I asked.

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“Oh, I ran over as soon as I heard of the accident. Everybody ran here. The whole neighborhood is on top of the bluff. But nobody wanted to come into the tunnel, because they were afraid that more of it might fall in. So I was able to work here all by myself; and I am very glad of it. I saw the soldering-iron and the little furnace outside of your house, where the plumbers had been using them, and I brought them here myself. Then I thought that a simple hole through the ice might soon freeze up again, and if you were alive inside I could not do anything to help you. And so I ran home and got my diploma-case, that had had one end melted out of it, and I brought that to stick in the hole. I’m so glad that it is long enough, or almost.”

“Oh, Agnes,” I cried, “you thought of all this for me?”

“Why, of course, Mr. Cuthbert,” she answered, before I had a chance to say anything more. “You were in great danger of perishing before the men got to you, and nobody seemed to think of any way to give you immediate relief. And don’t you think that a collegiate education is a good thing for girls—at least, that it was for me?”

“Agnes,” I exclaimed, “please let me speak. I want to tell you—I must tell you—”

But the voice of Agnes was clearer than mine, and it overpowered my words. “Mr. Cuthbert,” she said, “we cannot both speak through this tube at the same time in opposite directions. I have here a bottle of water for you, but I am very much afraid it will not go through the diploma-case.”

“Oh, I don’t want any water,” I said. “I can

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eat ice if I am thirsty. What I want is to tell you—”

“Mr. Cuthbert,” said she, “you must not eat that ice. Water that was frozen countless ages ago may be very different from the water of modern times, and might not agree with you. Don’t touch it, please. I am going to push the bottle through if I can. I tried to think of everything that you might need, and brought them all at once, because, if I could not keep the hole open, I wanted to get them to you without losing a minute.”

Now the bottle came slowly through. It was a small beer-bottle, I think, and several times I was afraid it was going to stick fast and cut off communication between me and the outer world—that is to say, between me and Agnes. But at last the cork and the neck appeared, and I pulled it through. I did not drink any of it, but immediately applied my mouth to the tube.

“Agnes,” I said, “my dear Agnes, really you must not prevent me from speaking. I cannot delay another minute. This is an awful position for me to be in, and as you don’t seem to realize—”

“But I do realize, Mr. Cuthbert, that if you don’t walk about you will certainly freeze before you can be rescued. Between every two or three words you want to take at least one turn around that place. How dreadful it would be if you were suddenly to become benumbed and stiff! Everybody is thinking of that. The best diggers that Mr. Burton had were three colored men. But after they had gone down nothing like as deep as a well, they came up frightened, and said they would not dig another shovelful

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for the whole world. Perhaps you don't know it, but there's a story about the neighborhood that the negro hell is under your property. You know many of the colored people expect to be everlastingly punished with ice and not with fire—”

“Agnes,” I interrupted, “I am punished with ice and fire both. Please let me tell you—”

“I was going on to say, Mr. Cuthbert,” she interrupted, “that when the Italians heard why the colored men had come out of the hole they would not go in either, for they are just as afraid of everlasting ice as the negroes are, and were sure that if the bottom came out of that hole they would fall into a frozen lower world. So there was nothing to do but to send for paupers, and they are working now. You know paupers have to do what they are told without regard to their beliefs. They got a dozen of them from the poorhouse. Somebody said they just threw them into the hole. Now I must stop talking, for it is time for you to walk around again. Would you like another sandwich?”

“Agnes,” said I, endeavoring to speak calmly, “all I want is to be able to tell you—”

“And when you walk, Mr. Cuthbert, you had better keep around the edge of the chamber, for there is no knowing when they may come through. Mr. Burton and the foreman of the icemen measured the bluff so that they say the hole they are making is exactly over the middle of the chamber you are in, and if you walk around the edge the pieces may not fall on you.”

“If you don't listen to me, Agnes,” I said, “I'll go and sit anywhere, everywhere, where death may come

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to me quickest. Your coldness is worse than the coldness of the cave. I cannot bear it."

"But, Mr. Cuthbert," said Agnes, speaking, I thought, with some agitation, "I have been listening to you, and what more can you possibly have to say? If there is anything you want, let me know. I will run and get it for you."

"There is no need that you should go away to get what I want," I said. "It is there with you. It is you."

"Mr. Cuthbert," said Agnes, in a very low voice, but so distinctly that I could hear every word, "don't you think it would be better for you to give your whole mind to keeping yourself warm and strong? For if you let yourself get benumbed you may sink down and freeze."

"Agnes," I said, "I will not move from this little hole until I have told you that I love you, that I have no reason to care for life or rescue unless you return my love, unless you are willing to be mine. Speak quickly to me, Agnes, because I may not be rescued, and may never know whether my love for you is returned or not."

At this moment there was a tremendous crash behind me, and turning, I saw a mass of broken ice upon the floor of the cave, with a cloud of dust and smaller fragments still falling. And then, with a great scratching and scraping, and a howl loud enough to waken the echoes of all the lower regions, down came a red-headed, drunken shoemaker. I cannot say that he was drunk at that moment, but I knew the man the moment I saw his caroty poll, and it was drink which had sent him to the poorhouse.

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But the sprawling and howling cobbler did not reach the floor. A rope had been fastened around his waist to prevent a fall in case the bottom of the pit should suddenly give way, and he hung dangling in mid-air, with white face and distended eyes, cursing and swearing and vociferously entreating to be pulled up. But before he received any answer from above, or I could speak to him, there came through the hole in the roof of the cave a shower of stones and gravel, and with them a frantic Italian, his legs and arms outspread, his face wild with terror.

Just as he appeared in view he grasped the rope of the cobbler, and though in a moment he came down heavily upon the floor of the chamber, this broke his fall, and he did not appear to be hurt. Instantly he crouched low and almost upon all fours, and began to run around the chamber, keeping close to the walls, and screaming—I suppose to his saints to preserve him from the torments of the frozen damned.

In the midst of this hubbub came the voice of Agnes through the hole: “Oh, Mr. Cuthbert, what has happened? Are you alive?”

I was so disappointed by the appearance of these wretched interlopers at the moment it was about to be decided whether my life—should it last for years, or but for a few minutes—was to be black or bright, and I was so shaken and startled by the manner of their entry upon the scene, that I could not immediately shape the words necessary to inform Agnes what had happened. But, collecting my faculties, I was about to speak, when suddenly, with the force of the hind leg of a mule, I was pushed away from the aperture, and the demoniac Italian clapped his great

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mouth to the end of the tube and roared through it a volume of oaths and supplications. I attempted to thrust aside the wretched being, but I might as well have tried to move the ice-barrier itself. He had perceived that some one outside was talking to me, and in his frenzy he was imploring that some one should let him out.

While still endeavoring to move the man, I was seized by the arm, and turning, beheld the pallid face of the shoemaker. They had let him down so that he reached the floor. He tried to fall on his knees before me, but the rope was so short that he was able to go only part of the way down, and presented a most ludicrous appearance, with his toes scraping the icy floor and his arms thrown out as if he were paddling like a tadpole. "Oh, have mercy upon me, sir," he said, "and help me get out of this dreadful place. If you go to the hole and call up it's you, they will pull me up; but if they get you out first they will never think of me. I am a poor pauper, sir, but I never did nothin' to be packed in ice before I am dead."

Noticing that the Italian had left the end of the aperture in the block of ice, and that he was now shouting up the open shaft, I ran to the channel of communication which my Agnes had opened for me, and called through it; but the dear girl had gone.

The end of a ladder now appeared at the opening in the roof, and this was let down until it reached the floor. I started toward it; but before I had gone half the distance the frightened shoemaker and the maniac Italian sprang upon it, and, with shrieks and oaths, began a maddening fight for possession of the ladder. They might quickly have gone up one after the other,

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but each had no thought but to be first, and as one seized the rounds he was pulled away by the other, until I feared the ladder would be torn to pieces. The shoemaker finally pushed his way up a little distance, when the Italian sprang upon his back, endeavoring to climb over him. And so on they went up the shaft, fighting, swearing, kicking, scratching, shaking and wrenching the ladder, which had been tied to another one in order to increase its length, so that it was in danger of breaking, and tearing at each other in a fashion which made it wonderful that they did not both tumble headlong downward. They went on up, so completely filling the shaft with their struggling forms and their wild cries that I could not see or hear anything, and was afraid, in fact, to look up toward the outer air.

As I was afterwards informed, the Italian, who had slipped into the hole by accident, ran away like a frightened hare the moment he got his feet on firm ground, and the shoemaker sat down and swooned. By this performance he obtained from a benevolent bystander a drink of whiskey, the first he had had since he was committed to the poorhouse.

But a voice soon came down the shaft, calling to me. I recognized it as that of Tom Burton, and replied that I was safe, and that I was coming up the ladder. But in my attempt to climb I found that I was unable to do so. Chilled and stiffened by the cold, and weakened by fatigue and excitement, I believe I never should have been able to leave that ice-chamber if my faithful friend had not come down the ladder and vigorously assisted me to reach the outer air.

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Seated on the ground, my back against a great oak-tree, I was quickly surrounded by a crowd of my neighbors, the workmen, and the people who had been drawn to the spot by the news of the strange accident, to gaze at me as if I were some unknown being excavated from the bowels of the earth. I was sipping some brandy and water which Burton had handed me, when Aaron Boyce pushed himself in front of me.

“Well, sir,” he said, “I am mighty glad you got out of that scrape. I’m bound to say I didn’t expect you would. I have been sure all along that it wasn’t right to meddle with things that go ag’in’ nature, and I haven’t any doubt that you’ll see that for yourself, and fill up all them tunnels and shafts you’ve made. The ice that comes on ponds and rivers was good enough for our forefathers, and it ought to be good enough for us. And as for this cold stuff you find in your gravel-pit, I don’t believe it’s ice at all ; and if it is, like as not it’s made of some sort of pizen stuff that freezes easier than water. For everybody knows that water don’t freeze in a well, and if it don’t do that, why should it do it in any kind of a hole in the ground ? So perhaps it’s just as well that you did git shut up there, sir, and find out for yourself what a dangerous thing it is to fool with nature and try to git ice from the bottom of the ground instead of the top of the water.”

This speech made me angry, for I knew that old Boyce was a man who was always glad to get hold of anything which had gone wrong and try to make it worse ; but I was too weak to answer him.

This, however, would not have been necessary, for

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Tom Burton turned upon him. "Idiot!" said he, "if that is your way of thinking, you might as well say that if a well caves in you should never again dig for water, or that nobody should have a cellar under his house for fear that the house should fall into it. There's no more danger of the ice beneath us ever giving way again than there is that this bluff should crumble under our feet. That break in the roof of the ice-tunnel was caused by my digging away the face of the bluff very near that spot. The high temperature of the outer air weakened the ice, and it fell. But down here, under this ground and secure from the influences of the heat of the outer air, the mass of ice is more solid than rock. We will build a brick arch over the place where the accident happened, and then there will not be a safer mine on this continent than this ice-mine will be."

This was a wise and diplomatic speech from Burton, and it proved to be of great service to me, for the men who had been taking out ice had been a good deal frightened by the fall of the tunnel, and when it was proved that what Burton had said in regard to the cause of the weakening of the ice was entirely correct, they became willing to go to work again.

I now began to feel stronger and better, and rising to my feet, I glanced here and there into the crowd, hoping to catch a sight of Agnes. But I was not very much surprised at not seeing her, because she would naturally shrink from forcing herself into the midst of this motley company. But I felt that I must go and look for her without the loss of a minute, for if she should return to her father's house I might not be able to see her again.

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On the outskirts of the crowd I met Susan, who was almost overpowered with joy at seeing me safe again. I shook her by the hand, but, without replying to her warm-hearted protestations of thankfulness and delight, I asked her if she had seen Miss Havelot.

“Miss Agnes!” she exclaimed. “Why, no, sir. I expect she’s at home. And if she did come here with the rest of the neighbors, I didn’t see her, for when I found out what had happened, sir, I was so weak that I sat down in the kitchen all of a lump, and have just had strength enough to come out.”

“Oh, I know she was here,” I cried. “I am sure of that, and I do hope she’s not gone home again.”

“Know she was here!” exclaimed Susan. “Why, how on earth could you know that?”

I did not reply that it was not on the earth but under it that I became aware of the fact, but hurried toward the Havelot house, hoping to overtake Agnes if she had gone that way. But I did not see her, and suddenly a startling idea struck me, and I turned and ran home as fast as I could go. When I reached my grounds I went directly to the mouth of the shaft. There was nobody there, for the crowd was collected into a solid mass on the top of the bluff, listening to a lecture from Tom Burton, who deemed it well to promote the growth of interest and healthy opinion in regard to his wonderful discovery and my valuable possession. I hurried down the shaft, and near the end of it, just before it joined the ice-tunnel, I beheld Agnes sitting upon the wooden track. She was not unconscious, for as I approached she slightly turned her head. I sprang toward her; I kneeled beside her; I took her in my arms. “Oh, Agnes, dearest Agnes,” I cried,

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"what is the matter? What has happened to you? Has a piece of ice fallen upon you? Have you slipped and hurt yourself?"

She turned her beautiful eyes up toward me and for a moment did not speak. Then she said: "And they got you out? And you are in your right mind?"

"Right mind!" I exclaimed. "I have never been out of my mind. What are you thinking of?"

"Oh, you must have been," she said, "when you screamed at me in that horrible way. I was so frightened that I fell back, and I must have fainted."

Tremulous as I was with love and anxiety, I could not help laughing. "Oh, my dear Agnes, I did not scream at you. That was a crazed Italian who fell through the hole that they dug." Then I told her what had happened.

She heaved a gentle sigh. "I am so glad to hear that," she said. "There was one thing that I was thinking about just before you came, and which gave me a little bit of comfort: the words and yells I heard were dreadfully oniony, and somehow or other I could not connect that sort of thing with you."

It now struck me that during this conversation I had been holding my dear girl in my arms, and she had not shown the slightest sign of resistance or disapprobation. This made my heart beat high. "Oh, Agnes," I said, "I truly believe you love me, or you would not have been here—you would not have done for me all that you did. Why did you not answer me when I spoke to you through that wall of ice, through the hole your dear love had made in it? Why, when I was in such a terrible situation, not

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knowing whether I was to die or live, did you not comfort my heart with one sweet word?"

"Oh, Walter," she answered, "it wasn't at all necessary for you to say all that you did say, for I had suspected it before, and as soon as you began to call me Agnes I knew, of course, how you felt about it. And, besides, it really was necessary that you should move about to keep yourself from freezing. But the great reason for my not encouraging you to go on talking in that way was that I was afraid people might come into the tunnel, and as, of course, you would not know that they were there, you would go on making love to me through my diploma-case, and you know I should have perished with shame if I had had to stand here, with that old Mr. Boyce, and I don't know who else, listening to your words—which were very sweet to me, Walter, but which would have sounded awfully funny to them."

When she said that my words had been sweet to her I dropped the consideration of all other subjects.

When, about ten minutes afterwards, we came out of the shaft, we were met by Susan.

"Bless my soul and body, Mr. Cuthbert!" she exclaimed. "Did you find that young lady down there in the centre of the earth? It seems to me as if everything that you want comes to you out of the ground. But I have been looking for you to tell you that Mr. Havelot has been here after his daughter, and I'm sure, if he had known where she was, he would have been scared out of his wits."

"Father here!" exclaimed Agnes. "Where is he now?"

"I think he has gone home, miss. Indeed, I'm sure

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of it ; for my daughter Jennie, who was over here the same as all the other people in the county, I truly believe, told him—and I was proud she had the spirit to speak up that way to him—that your heart was almost broke when you heard about Mr. Cuthbert being shut up in the ice, and that most likely you was in your own room a-cryin' your eyes out. When he heard that, he stood lookin' all around the place, and then he asked me if he might go in the house. When I told him he was most welcome, he went in. I offered to show him about, which he said was no use, that he had been there often enough. And he went everywhere, I truly believe, except in the garret and the cellar. After he got through with that he went out to the barn, and then walked home."

"I must go to him immediately," said Agnes.

"But not alone," said I. And together we walked through the woods, over the little field, and across the Havelot lawn to the house. We were told that the old gentleman was in his library, and together we entered the room.

Mr. Havelot was sitting by a table on which were lying several open volumes of an encyclopedia. When he turned and saw us, he closed his book, pushed back his chair, and took off his spectacles. "Upon my word, sir !" he cried. "So the first thing you do after they pull you out of the earth is to come here and break my commands."

"I came on the invitation of your daughter, sir."

"And what right has she to invite you, I'd like to know?"

"She has every right, for to her I owe my existence."

"What rabid nonsense !" exclaimed the old gentle-

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man. "People don't owe their existence to the silly creatures they fall in love with."

"I assure you I am correct, sir." And then I related to him what his daughter had done, and how, through her angelic agency, my rescuers had found me a living being instead of a frozen corpse.

"Stuff!" said Mr. Havelot. "People can live in a temperature of thirty-two degrees above zero all winter. Out in Minnesota they think that's hot. And you gave him victuals and drink through your diploma-case! Well, miss, I told you that if you tried to roast chestnuts in that diploma-case the bottom would come out."

"But you see, father," said Agnes, earnestly, "the reason I did that was because when I roasted them in anything shallow they popped into the fire, but they could not jump out of the diploma-case."

"Well, something else seems to have jumped out of it," said the old gentleman. "And something with which I am not satisfied. I have been looking over these books, sir, and have read the articles on ice, glaciers, and caves, and I find no record of anything in the whole history of the world which in the least resembles the cock-and-bull story I am told about the butt-end of a glacier which tumbled into a cave in your ground, and has been lying there through all the geological ages, and the eras of formation, and periods of animate existence, down to the days of Noah, and Moses, and Methuselah, and Rameses II. and Alexander the Great, and Martin Luther, and John Wesley, to this day, for you to dig out and sell to the Williamstown Ice Company."

"But that's what happened, sir," said I.

"And besides, father," added Agnes, "the gold and

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silver that people take out of mines may have been in the ground as long as that ice has been."

"Bosh!" said Mr. Havelot. "The cases are not at all similar. It is simply impossible that a piece of a glacier should have fallen into a cave and been preserved in that way. The temperature of caves is always above the freezing-point, and that ice would have melted a million years before you were born."

"But, father," said Agnes, "the temperature of caves filled with ice must be very much lower than that of common caves."

"And apart from that," I added, "the ice is still there, sir."

"That doesn't make the slightest difference," he replied. "It's against all reason and common sense that such a thing could have happened. Even if there ever was a glacier in this part of the country, and if the lower portion of it did stick out over an immense hole in the ground, that protruding end would never have broken off and tumbled in. Glaciers are too thick and massive for that."

"But the glacier is there, sir," said I, "in spite of your own reasoning."

"Then again," continued the old gentleman, "if there had been a cave and a projecting spur the ice would have gradually melted and dripped into the cave, and we would have had a lake and not an ice-mine. It is a perfect absurdity."

"But it's there, notwithstanding," said I.

"And you cannot subvert facts, you know, father," added Agnes.

"Confound facts!" he cried. "I base my arguments on sober, cool-headed reason, and there's nothing

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that can withstand reason. The thing's impossible, and therefore it has never happened. I went over to your place, sir, when I heard of the accident, for the misfortunes of my neighbors interest me, no matter what may be my opinion of them, and when I found that you had been extricated from your ridiculous predicament, I went through your house, and I was pleased to find it in as good or better condition than I had known it in the days of your respected father. I was glad to see the improvement in your circumstances. But when I am told, sir, that your apparent prosperity rests upon such an absurdity as a glacier in a gravel-hill, I can but smile with contempt, sir."

I was getting a little tired of this. "But the glacier is there, sir," I said, "and I am taking out ice every day, and have reason to believe that I can continue to take it out for the rest of my life. With such facts as these before me, I am bound to say, sir, that I don't care in the least about reason."

"And I am here, father," said Agnes, coming close to me, "and here I want to continue for the rest of my days."

The old gentleman looked at her. "And I suppose," he said, "that you, too, don't in the least care about reason?"

"Not a bit," replied Agnes.

"Well," said Mr. Havelot, rising, "I have done all I can to make you two listen to reason, and I can do no more. I despair of making sensible human beings of you, and so you might as well go on acting like a couple of ninnyhammers."

"Can ninnyhammers marry and then settle on the property adjoining yours, sir?" I asked.

"Yes, I suppose they can," he said. "And when

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the aboriginal ice-house, or whatever the ridiculous thing is that they have discovered, gives out, I suppose that they can come to a reasonable man and ask him for a little money to buy bread and butter."

Two years have passed, and Agnes and the glacier are still mine. Great blocks of ice now flow in almost a continuous stream from the mine to the railroad station, and in a smaller but quite as continuous stream an income flows in upon Agnes and me; and from one of the experimental excavations made by Tom Burton on the bluff comes a stream of ice-cold water running in a sparkling brook a-down my dell. On fine mornings, before I am up, I am credibly informed that Aaron Boyce may generally be found, in season and out of season, endeavoring to catch the trout with which I am trying to stock that ice-cold stream. The diploma-case, which I caused to be carefully removed from the ice-barrier which had imprisoned me, now hangs in my study, and holds our marriage certificate.

Near the line fence which separates his property from mine, Mr. Havelot has sunk a wide shaft. "If the glacier spur under your land was a quarter of a mile wide," he says to me, "it was probably at least a half a mile long; and if that were the case, the upper end of it extends into my place, and I may be able to strike it." He has a good deal of money, this worthy Mr. Havelot, but he would be very glad to increase his riches, whether they are based upon sound reason or ridiculous facts. As for Agnes and myself, no facts or any reason could make us happier than our ardent love and our frigid fortune.

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“WELL, sir,” said old Peter, as he came out on the porch with his pipe, “so you came here to go fishin’?”

Peter Gruse was the owner of the farm-house where I had arrived that day, just before supper-time. He was a short, strongly built old man, with a pair of pretty daughters, and little gold rings in his ears. Two things distinguished him from the farmers in the country round about: one was the rings in his ears, and the other was the large and comfortable house in which he kept his pretty daughters. The other farmers in that region had fine large barns for their cattle and horses, but very poor houses for their daughters. Old Peter’s ear-rings were indirectly connected with his house. He had not always lived among those mountains. He had been on the sea, where his ears were decorated, and he had travelled a good deal on land, where he had ornamented his mind with many ideas which were not in general use in the part of his State in which he was born. His house stood a little back from the highroad, and if a traveller wished to be entertained, Peter was generally willing to take him in, provided he had left his wife and family at home. The old man himself had no

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objection to wives and children, but his two pretty daughters had.

These young women had waited on their father and myself at supper-time, one continually bringing hot griddle-cakes, and the other giving me every opportunity to test the relative merits of the seven different kinds of preserved fruit which, in little glass plates, covered the otherwise unoccupied spaces on the table-cloth. The latter, when she found that there was no further possible way of serving us, presumed to sit down at a corner of the table and begin her supper. But in spite of this apparent humility, which was only a custom of the country, there was that in the general air of the pretty daughters which left no doubt in the mind of the intelligent observer that they stood at the wheel in that house. There was a son of fourteen, who sat at table with us, but he did not appear to count as a member of the family.

“Yes,” I answered, “I understood that there was good fishing hereabout, and, at any rate, I should like to spend a few days among these hills and mountains.”

“Well,” said Peter, “there’s trout in some of our streams, though not as many as there used to be, and there’s hills a-plenty, and mountains too, if you choose to walk fur enough. They’re a good deal furder off than they look. What did you bring with you to fish with?”

“Nothing at all,” I answered. “I was told in the town that you were a great fisherman, and that you could let me have all the tackle I would need.”

“Upon my word,” said old Peter, resting his pipe

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hand on his knee and looking steadfastly at me, "you're the queerest fisherman I've seed yet. Nigh every year some two or three of 'em stop here in the fishin' season, and there was never a man who didn't bring his j'nted pole, and his reels, and his lines, and his hooks, and his dry-goods flies, and his whiskey-flask with a long strap to it. Now, if you want all these things, I haven't got 'em."

"Whatever you use yourself will suit me," I answered.

"All right, then," said he. "I'll do the best I can for you in the mornin'. But it's plain enough to me that you're not a game fisherman, or you wouldn't come here without your tools."

To this remark I made answer to the effect that, though I was very fond of fishing, my pleasure in it did not depend upon the possession of all the appliances of professional sport.

"Perhaps you think," said the old man, "from the way I spoke, that I don't believe them fellers with the j'nted poles can ketch fish, but that ain't so. That old story about the little boy with the pin-hook who ketched all the fish, while the gentleman with the modern improvements, who stood alongside of him, kep' throwin' out his beautiful flies and never got nothin', is a pure lie. The fancy chaps, who must have everything jist so, gen'rally gits fish. But for all that, I don't like their way of fishin', and I take no stock in it myself. I've been fishin', on and off, ever since I was a little boy, and I've caught nigh every kind there is, from the big jewfish and cavalyoes down South to the trout and minnies round about here. But when I try to ketch a fish, the first thing

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I do is to try to git him on the hook, and the next thing is to git him out of the water jist as soon as I kin. I don't put in no time worryin' him.

"There's only two animals that likes to worry smaller creeturs a good while afore they kill 'em: one is the cat, and the other is what they call the game fisherman. This kind of a feller never goes after no fish that don't mind being ketched. He goes fur them kinds that loves their home in the water and hates most to leave it, and he makes it jist as hard fur 'em as he kin. What the game fisher likes is the smallest kind of a hook, the thinnest line, and a fish that it takes a good while to weaken. The longer the weak'nin' business kin be spun out, the more the sport. The idee is to let the fish think there's a chance fur him to git away. That's jist like a cat with her mouse. She lets the little creetur hop off, but the minnit he gits fur enough away, she jumps on him and jabs him with her claws, and then, if there's any game left in him, she lets him try ag'in. Of course the game fisher could have a strong line and a stout pole and git his fish in a good sight quicker, if he wanted to, but that wouldn't be sport. He couldn't give him the butt and spin him out, and reel him in, and let him jump and run till his pluck is clean worn out. Now, I likes to git my fish ashore with all the pluck in 'em. It makes 'em taste better.

"As fur fun, I'll be bound I've had jist as much of that, and more, too, than most of these fellers who are so dreadful anxious to have everything jist right, and think they can't go fishin' till they've spent enough money to buy a suit of Sunday clothes. As a gen'ral rule they're a solemn lot, and work pretty hard at

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their fun. When I work I want to be paid fur it, and when I go in fur fun I want to take it easy and cheerful. Now I wouldn't say so much ag'in' these fellers," said old Peter, as he arose and put his empty pipe on a little shelf under the porch roof, "if it wasn't for one thing, and that is that they think their kind of fishin' is the only kind worth considerin'. The way they look down upon plain Christian fishin' is enough to rile a hitchin'-post. I don't want to say nothin' ag'in' no man's way of attendin' to his own affairs, whether it's kitchen-gardenin', or whether it's fishin', if he says nothin' ag'in' my way ; but when he looks down on me, and grins at me, I want to haul myself up, and grin at him, if I kin. And in this case I kin. I s'pose the house-eat and the cat-fisher (by which I don't mean the man who fishes fur cat-fish) was both made as they is, and they can't help it ; but that don't give 'em no right to put on airs before other bein's, who gits their meat with a square kill. Good night. And sence I've talked so much about it, I've a mind to go fishin' with you to-morrow myself."

The next morning found old Peter of the same mind, and after breakfast he proceeded to fit me out for a day of what he called "plain Christian trout-fishin'." He gave me a reed rod about nine feet long, light, strong, and nicely balanced. The tackle he produced was not of the fancy order, but his lines were of fine strong linen, and his hooks were of good shape, clean and sharp, and snooded to the lines with a neatness that indicated the hand of a man who had been where he had learned to wear little gold rings in his ears.

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"Here are some of these feather insects," he said, "which you kin take along if you like." And he handed me a paper containing a few artificial flies. "They're pretty nat'r'al," he said, "and the hooks is good. A man who came here fishin' gave 'em to me, but I sha'n't want 'em to-day. At this time of year grasshoppers is the best bait in the kind of place where we're goin' to fish. The stream, after it comes down from the mountain, runs through half a mile of medder-land before it strikes into the woods ag'in. A grasshopper is a little creetur that's got as much conceit as if his j'nted legs was fish-poles, and he thinks he kin jump over this narrer run of water whenever he pleases ; but he don't always do it, and then if he doesn't git snapped up by the trout that lie along the banks in the medder, he is floated along into the woods, where there's always fish enough to come to the second table."

Having got me ready, Peter took his own particular pole, which he assured me he had used for eleven years, and hooking on his left arm a good-sized basket, which his elder pretty daughter had packed with cold meat, bread, butter, and preserves, we started forth for a three-mile walk to the fishing-ground. The day was a favorable one for our purpose, the sky being sometimes overclouded, which was good for fishing, and also for walking on a highroad, and sometimes bright, which was good for effects of mountain scenery. Not far from the spot where old Peter proposed to begin our sport, a small frame house stood by the roadside, and here the old man halted and entered the open door without knocking or giving so much as a premonitory stamp. I fol-

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lowed, imitating my companion in leaving my pole outside, which appeared to be the only ceremony that the etiquette of those parts required of visitors. In the room we entered, a small man in his shirt-sleeves sat mending a basket-handle. He nodded to Peter, and Peter nodded to him.

"We've come up a-fishin'," said the old man. "Kin your boys give us some grasshoppers?"

"I don't know that they've got any ready ketched," said he, "fur I reckon I used what they had this mornin'. But they kin git you some. Here, Dan, you and Sile go and ketch Mr. Gruse and this young man some grasshoppers. Take that mustard-box, and see that you git it full."

Peter and I now took seats, and the conversation began about a black cow which Peter had to sell, and which the other was willing to buy if the old man would trade for sheep, which animals, however, the basket-mender did not appear just at that time to have in his possession. As I was not very much interested in this subject, I walked to the back door and watched two small boys, in scanty shirts and trousers and ragged straw hats, who were darting about in the grass catching grasshoppers, of which insects, judging by the frequent pounces of the boys, there seemed a plentiful supply.

"Got it full?" said their father, when the boys came in.

"Crammed," said Dan.

Old Peter took the little can, pressed the top firmly on, put it in his coat-tail pocket, and rose to go. "You'd better think about that cow, Barney," said he. He said nothing to the boys about the box of

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bait ; but I could not let them catch grasshoppers for us for nothing, so I took a dime from my pocket, and gave it to Dan. Dan grinned, and Sile looked sheepishly happy, and at the sight of the piece of silver an expression of interest came over the face of the father. "Wait a minute," said he, and he went into a little room that seemed to be a kitchen. Returning, he brought with him a small string of trout. "Do you want to buy some fish?" he said. "These is nice fresh ones. I ketched 'em this mornin'."

To offer to sell fish to a man who is just about to go out to catch them for himself might, in most cases, be considered an insult, but it was quite evident that nothing of the kind was intended by Barney. He probably thought that if I bought grasshoppers I might buy fish. "You kin have 'em for a quarter," he said.

It was derogatory to my pride to buy fish at such a moment, but the man looked very poor, and there was a shade of anxiety on his face which touched me. Old Peter stood by without saying a word.

"It might be well," I said, turning to him, "to buy these fish, for we may not catch enough for supper."

"Such things do happen," said the old man.

"Well," said I, "if we have these we shall feel safe in any case." And I took the fish and gave the man a quarter. It was not, perhaps, a professional act, but the trout were well worth the money, and I felt that I was doing a deed of charity.

Old Peter and I now took our rods, and crossed the road into an enclosed field, and thence into a wide stretch of grass-land, bounded by hills in front of us and to the right, while a thick forest lay to the left.

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We had walked but a short distance, when Peter said : "I'll go down into the woods, and try my luck there, and you'd better go along up-stream, about a quarter of a mile, to where it's rocky. P'r'aps you ain't used to fishin' in the woods, and you might git your line ketched. You'll find the trout'll bite in the rough water."

"Where is the stream ?" I asked.

"This is it," he said, pointing to a little brook which was scarcely too wide for me to step across, "and there's fish right here, but they're hard to ketch, fur they git plenty of good livin' and are mighty sassy about their eatin'. But you kin ketch 'em up there."

Old Peter now went down toward the woods, while I walked up the little stream. I had seen trout-brooks before, but never one so diminutive as this. However, when I came nearer to the point where the stream issued from between two of the foot-hills of the mountains which lifted their forest-covered heights in the distance, I found it wider and shallower, breaking over its rocky bottom in sparkling little cascades.

Fishing in such a jolly little stream, surrounded by this mountain scenery, and with the privileges of the beautiful situation all to myself, would have been a joy to me if I had had never a bite. But no such ill luck befell me. Peter had given me the can of grasshoppers after putting half of them into his own bait-box, and these I used with much success. It was grasshopper season, and the trout were evidently on the lookout for them. I fished in the ripples under the little waterfalls, and every now and then I drew out a lively trout. Most of these were of moderate size, and some of them might have been called small.

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The large ones probably fancied the forest shades where old Peter went. But all I caught were fit for the table, and I was very well satisfied with the result of my sport.

About noon I began to feel hungry, and thought it time to look up the old man, who had the lunch-basket. I walked down the bank of the brook, and some time before I reached the woods I came to a place where it expanded to a width of about ten feet. The water here was very clear, and the motion quiet, so that I could easily see to the bottom, which did not appear to be more than a foot below the surface. Gazing into this transparent water, as I walked, I saw a large trout glide across the stream, and disappear under the grassy bank which overhung the opposite side. I instantly stopped. This was a much larger fish than any I had caught, and I determined to try for him.

I stepped back from the bank, so as to be out of sight, and put a fine grasshopper on my hook ; then I lay, face downward, on the grass, and worked myself slowly forward until I could see the middle of the stream. Then, quietly raising my pole, I gave my grasshopper a good swing, as if he had made a wager to jump over the stream at its widest part. But as he certainly would have failed in such an ambitious endeavor, especially if he had been caught by a puff of wind, I let him come down upon the surface of the water a little beyond the middle of the brook. Grasshoppers do not sink when they fall into the water, and so I kept this fellow upon the surface, and gently moved him along, as if, with all the conceit taken out of him by the result of his ill-considered leap, he was

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ignominiously endeavoring to swim to shore. As I did this, I saw the trout come out from under the bank, move slowly toward the grasshopper, and stop directly under him. Trembling with anxiety and eager expectation, I endeavored to make the movements of the insect still more natural, and, as far as I was able, I threw into him a sudden perception of his danger, and a frenzied desire to get away. But either the trout had had all the grasshoppers he wanted, or he was able, from long experience, to perceive the difference between a natural exhibition of emotion and a histrionic imitation of it, for he slowly turned, and, with a few slight movements of his tail, glided back under the bank. In vain did the grasshopper continue his frantic efforts to reach the shore ; in vain did he occasionally become exhausted and sink a short distance below the surface ; in vain did he do everything that he knew to show that he appreciated what a juicy and delicious morsel he was, and how he feared that the trout might yet be tempted to seize him : the fish did not come out again.

Then I withdrew my line, and moved back from the stream. I now determined to try Mr. Trout with a fly, and I took out the paper old Peter Gruse had given me. I did not know exactly what kind of winged insects were in order at this time of the year, but I was sure that yellow butterflies were not particular about just what month it was, so long as the sun shone warmly. I therefore chose that one of Peter's flies which was made of the yellowest feathers, and, removing the snood and hook from my line, I hastily attached this fly, which was provided with a hook quite suitable for my desired prize. Crouching

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on the grass, I again approached the brook. Gayly flitting above the glassy surface of the water, in all the fancied security of tender youth and innocence, came my yellow fly. Backward and forward over the water he gracefully flew, sometimes rising a little into the air, as if to view the varied scenery of the woods and mountains, and then settling for a moment close to the surface, to better inspect his glittering image as it came up from below, and showing in his every movement his intense enjoyment of summer-time and life.

Out from his dark retreat now came the trout, and settling quietly at the bottom of the brook, he appeared to regard the venturesome insect with a certain interest. But he must have detected the iron barb of vice beneath the mask of blitheful innocence, for, after a short deliberation, the trout turned and disappeared under the bank. As he slowly moved away, he seemed to be bigger than ever. I must catch that fish ! Surely he would bite at something. It was quite evident that his mind was not wholly unsusceptible to emotions emanating from an awakening appetite, and I believed that if he saw exactly what he wanted, he would not neglect an opportunity of availing himself of it. But what did he want ? I must certainly find out. Drawing myself back again, I took off the yellow fly, and put on another. This was a white one, with black blotches, like a big miller moth which had fallen into an ink-pot. It was surely a conspicuous creature, and as I crept forward and sent it swooping over the stream, I could not see how any trout, with a single insectivorous tooth in his head, could fail to rise to such an occasion. But this

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trout did not rise. He would not even come out from under his bank to look at the swiftly flitting creature. He probably could see it well enough from where he was.

But I was not to be discouraged. I put on another fly—a green one with a red tail. It did not look like any insect that I had ever seen, but I thought that the trout might know more about such things than I. He did come out to look at it, but probably considering it a product of that modern aestheticism which sacrifices natural beauty to mediaeval crudeness of color and form, he retired without evincing any disposition to countenance this style of art.

It was evident that it would be useless to put on any other flies, for the two I had left were a good deal bedraggled, and not nearly so attractive as those I had used. Just before leaving the house that morning, Peter's son had given me a wooden match-box filled with worms for bait, which although I did not expect to need, I put in my pocket. As a last resort I determined to try the trout with a worm. I selected the plumpest and most comely of the lot. I put a new hook on my line. I looped him about it in graceful coils, and cautiously approached the water, as before. Now a worm never attempts to wildly leap across a flowing brook, nor does he flit in thoughtless innocence through the sunny air and over the bright transparent stream. If he happens to fall into the water, he sinks to the bottom, and if he be of a kind not subject to drowning, he generally endeavors to secrete himself under a stone, or to burrow in the soft mud. With this knowledge of his nature, I gently dropped my worm upon the surface of the stream, and

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then allowed him slowly to sink. Out sailed the trout from under the bank, but stopped before reaching the sinking worm. There was a certain something in his action which seemed to indicate a disgust at the sight of such plebeian food, and I feared that he might now swim off, and pay no further attention to my varied baits.

Suddenly there was a quick ripple in the water, and I felt a sharp pull on the line. In that instant I struck, and then there was a tug! My blood boiled through every vein and artery, and I sprang to my feet. I did not give him the butt; I did not let him run with yards of line down the brook, nor reel him in, and let him make another mad course up-stream. I did not turn him over as he jumped into the air, nor endeavor, in any way, to show him that I understood those tricks which his depraved nature prompted him to play upon the angler. With an absolute dependence upon the strength of old Peter's tackle, I lifted the fish. Out he came from the water, which held him with a gentle suction as if unwilling to let him go, and then he whirled through the air like a meteor flecked with rosy fire, and landed on the fresh green grass a dozen feet behind me. Down on my knees I dropped before him as he tossed and rolled, his beautiful spots and colors glistening in the sun. He was truly a splendid trout, fully a foot long, round and heavy. Carefully seizing him, I easily removed the hook from the bony roof of his capacious mouth thickly set with sparkling teeth, and then I tenderly killed him—with all his pluck, as old Peter would have said, still in him.

I covered the rest of the fish in my basket with wet

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plantain-leaves, and laid my trout king on this cool green bed. Then I hurried off to the old man, whom I saw coming out of the woods. When I opened my basket and showed him what I had caught, Peter looked surprised, and, taking up the trout, examined it.

"Why, this is a big feller," he said. "At first I thought it was Barney Sloat's boss trout, but it isn't long enough fur him. Barney showed me his trout, that gen'rally keeps in a deep pool, where a tree has fallen over the stream down there. Barney tells me he often sees him, and he's been tryin' fur two years to ketch him, but he never has, and I say he never will, fur them big trout's got too much sense to fool round any kind of victuals that's got a string to it. They let a little fish eat all he wants, and then they eat him. How did you ketch this one?"

I gave an account of the manner of the capture, to which Peter listened with interest and approval.

"If you'd 'a' stood off and made a cast at that feller, you'd either have caught him at the first flip, which isn't likely, as he didn't seem to want no feather flies, or else you'd 'a' skeered him away. That's all well enough in the tumblin' water, where you gen'rally go fur trout, but the man that's got the true feelin' fur fish will try to suit his idees to theirs, and if he keeps on doin' that, he's like to learn a thing or two that may do him good. That's a fine fish, and you ketched him well. I've got a lot of 'em, but nothin' of that heft."

After luncheon we fished for an hour or two with no result worth recording, and then we started for home. A couple of partridges ran across the road some distance ahead of us, and these gave Peter an idea.

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"Do you know," said he, "if things go on as they're goin' on now, that there'll come a time when it won't be considered high-toned sport to shoot a bird slam-bang dead? The game gunners will pop 'em with little harpoons with long threads tied to 'em, and the feller that can tire out his bird, and haul him in with the longest and thinnest piece of spool thread, will be the crackest sportsman."

At this point I remarked to my companion that perhaps he was a little hard on the game fishermen.

"Well," said old Peter, with a smile on his corrugated visage, "I reckon I'd have to do a lot of talkin' before I'd git even with 'em fur the way they give me the butt fur my style of fishin'. What I say behind their backs I say to their faces. I seed one of these fellers once with a fish on his hook, that he was runnin' up and down the stream like a chased chicken. 'Why don't you pull him in?' says I. 'And break my rod and line?' says he. 'Why don't you have a stronger line and pole?' says I. 'There wouldn't be no science in that,' says he. 'If it's your science you want to show off,' says I, 'you ought to fish for mud-eels. There's more game in 'em than there is in any other fish round here, and as they're mighty lively out of water you might play one of 'em fur half an hour after you got him on shore. It would take all your science to keep him from reelin' up his end of the line faster than you could yourn.'"

When we reached the farm the old man went into the barn, and I took the fish into the house. I found the two pretty daughters in the large room where the eating and some of the cooking were done. I opened my basket, and with great pride showed them the big

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trout I had caught. They evidently thought it was a large fish, but they looked at each other and smiled in a way I did not understand. I had expected from them at least as much admiration for my prize and my skill as their father had shown.

"You don't seem to think much of this fine trout that I took such trouble to catch," I remarked.

"You mean," said the elder girl, with a laugh, "that you bought of Barney Sloat."

I looked at her in astonishment.

"Barney was along here to-day," she said, "and he told about your buying your fish of him."

"Bought of him!" I exclaimed indignantly. "A little string of fish at the bottom of the basket I bought of him, but all the others, and this big one, I caught myself."

"Oh, of course," said the elder pretty daughter, "bought the little ones and caught all the big ones!"

"Barney Sloat ought to have kept his mouth shut," said the younger pretty daughter, looking at me with an expression of pity. "He'd got his money, and he hadn't no business to go telling on people. Nobody likes that sort of thing. But this big fish is a real nice one, and you shall have it for your supper."

"Thank you," I said with dignity, and left the room.

I did not intend to have any further words with these young women on this subject, but I cannot deny that I was annoyed and mortified. This was the result of a charitable action. I think I was never more proud of anything than of catching that trout, and it was a good deal of a downfall to suddenly find myself regarded as a mere city man fishing with a silver hook. But, after all, what did it matter?

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The boy who did not seem to be accounted a member of the family came into the house, and as he passed me he smiled good-humoredly, and said: "Buyed 'em!"

I felt like throwing a chair at him, but refrained out of respect for my host. Before supper the old man came out on the porch where I was sitting. "It seems," said he, "that my gals has got it inter their heads that you bought that big fish of Barney Sloat, and as I can't say I seed you ketch it, they're not willin' to give in, specially as I didn't git no such big one. 'Tain't wise to buy fish when you're goin' fishin' yourself. It's pretty certain to tell ag'in' you."

"You ought to have given me that advice before," I said, somewhat shortly. "You saw me buy the fish."

"You don't s'pose," said old Peter, "that I'm goin' to say anything to keep money out of my neighbors' pockets. We don't do that way in these parts. But I've told the gals they're not to speak another word about it, so you needn't give your mind no worry on that score. And now let's go in to supper. If you're as hungry as I am, there won't be many of them fish left fur breakfast."

That evening, as we were sitting smoking on the porch, old Peter's mind reverted to the subject of the unfounded charge against me. "It goes pretty hard," he remarked, "to have to stand up and take a thing you don't like when there's no call fur it. It's bad enough when there is a call fur it. That matter about your fish-buyin' reminds me of what happened two summers ago to my sister, or ruther to her two little boys—or, more correct yit, to one of 'em. Them was

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two cur'ous little boys. They was allus tradin' with each other. Their father deals mostly in horses, and they must have got it from him. At the time I'm telling of they'd traded everything they had, and when they hadn't nothin' else left to swap they traded names Joe he took Johnny's name, and Johnny he took Joe's. Jist about when they'd done this, they both got sick with somethin' or other, the oldest one pretty bad, the other not much. Now there ain't no doctor inside of twenty miles of where my sister lives ; but there's one who sometimes has a call to go through that part of the country, and the people about there is allus very glad when they chance to be sick when he comes along. Now this good luck happened to my sister, fur the doctor come by jist at this time. He looks into the state of the boys, and while their mother has gone down-stairs he mixes some medicine he has along with him. 'What's your name ?' he says to the oldest boy, when he'd done it. Now, as he'd traded names with his brother, fair and square, he wasn't goin' back on the trade, and he said, 'Joe.' 'And my name's Johnny,' up and says the other one. Then the doctor he goes and gives the bottle of medicine to their mother, and says he : 'This medicine is fur Joe. You must give him a tablespoonful every two hours. Keep up the treatment, and he'll be all right. As fur Johnny, there's nothin' much the matter with him ; he don't need no medicine.' And then he went away. Every two hours after that, Joe, who wasn't sick worth mentionin', had to swallow a dose of horrid stuff, and pretty soon he took to his bed, and Johnny he jist played round and got well in the nat'-ral way. Joe's mother kept up the treatment, gittin'

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up in the night to feed that stuff to him. But the poor little boy got wuss and wuss, and one mornin' he says to his mother, says he : 'Mother, I guess I'm goin' to die, and I'd ruther do that than take any more of that medicine, and I wish you'd call Johnny, and we'll trade names back ag'in, and if he don't want to come and do it, you kin tell him he kin keep the old mink-skin I gave him to boot, on account of his name havin' a Wesley in it.' 'Trade names !' says his mother. 'What do you mean by that?' Then he told her what he and Johnny had done. 'And did you ever tell anybody about this?' says she. 'Nobody but Dr. Barnes,' says he. 'After that I got sick and forgot it.' When my sister heard that, an idee struck into her like you put a fork into an apple dumplin'. Traded names, and told the doctor ! She'd all along thought it strange that the boy that seemed wuss should be turned out, and the other one put under treatment ; but it wasn't fur her to set up her opinion ag'in' that of a man like Dr. Barnes. Down she went, in about seventeen jumps, to where Eli Timmins, the hired man, was ploughin' in the corn. 'Take that horse out of that,' she hollers, 'and you may kill him if you have to, but git Dr. Barnes here before my little boy dies.' When the doctor come he heard the story, and looked at the sick youngster, and then says he : 'If he'd kept his mink-skin, and not hankered after a Wesley to his name, he'd 'a' had a better time of it. Stop the treatment, and he'll be all right.' Which she did, and he was. Now it seems to me that this is a good deal like your case. You've had to take a lot of medicine that didn't belong to you, and I guess it's made you feel pretty bad ; but I've told my gals to stop the treat-

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ment, and you'll be all right in the mornin'. Good night. Your candle-stick is on the kitchen-table."

For two days longer I remained in this neighborhood, wandering alone over the hills, and up the mountain-sides, and by the brooks, which tumbled and gurgled through the lonely forest. Each evening I brought home a goodly supply of trout, but never a great one like the noble fellow for which I angled in the meadow stream.

On the morning of my departure I stood on the porch with old Peter, waiting for the arrival of the mail-driver, who was to take me to the nearest railroad town.

"I don't want to say nothin'," remarked the old man, "that would keep them fellers with the j'nted poles from stoppin' at my house when they comes to these parts a-fishin'. I ain't got no objections to their poles. 'Tain't that. And I don't mind, nuther, their standin' off and throwin' their flies as fur as they've a mind to. That's not it. And it ain't even the way they have of worryin' their fish. I wouldn't do it myself, but if they like it, that's their business. But what does rile me is the cheeky way in which they stand up and say that there isn't no decent way of fishin' but their way. And that to a man that's ketched more fish, of more different kinds, with more game in 'em, and had more fun at it, with a lot less money and less tomfoolin', than any fishin' feller that ever come here and talked to me like an old eat tryin' to teach a dog to ketch rabbits. No, sir ! Ag'in I say that I don't take no money fur entertainin' the only man that ever come out here to go a-fishin' in a plain, Christian way. But if you feel tetchy about not payin'

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nothin', you kin send me one of them poles in three pieces—a good strong one, that'll lift Barney Sloat's trout, if ever I hook him."

I sent him the rod ; next summer I am going out to see him use it.

